

Problems with H-2B visa program have employers sitting, waiting

Carnivals unable to hire domestic workers; H-2B is only option to fill positions

AT: Pam Sherborne
psherborne@amusementtoday.com

WASHINGTON, D.C. —Despite years of petitioning U.S. congressmen and senators for change in the H-2B visa program, donating money to the cause and making trips to the nation's capital for the cause, many carnival owners are finding themselves right back in the same place they have been for the past several years.

Some are (once again) sitting, waiting, pondering and wondering about the upcoming season and if they will have a sufficient workforce to operate. They have no idea whether or not they will be able to receive any workers from the visa program under which employers may hire seasonal foreign workers.

"Honestly, we are getting a little sick and tired of it," said **Michael Wood, Wood Entertainment Co.**, an independent ride operator based in San Antonio, Texas.

His sentiment is echoed by **Mary Talley, Talley Amusements**, based in Fort Worth, Texas.

"We all are getting pretty annoyed with the whole thing," Talley said.

There has been no real push in Washington, D.C., to put a permanent fix on the program. Every year, the cap on the number of foreign workers allowed under the program is reached quickly and falls significantly

short of the need.

The official cap is 66,000 visas awarded in two 33,000 increments, for dates of work Oct. 1-March 31 and April 1-Sept. 30. Employers are required to wait until 90 days from the first day of need to apply.

The cap for the first half of fiscal year 2019 was reached Dec. 6, 2018 and Feb. 22, 2019 for the second half. The greatest need for workers falls into the second half. There were 97,800 applications for the 33,000 visas this year.

For the past two years, the **Secretary of Homeland Security** released 15,000 additional visas over the cap, but, said Wood, it was really too little, too late for many of his colleagues, not to mention the other employers from other seasonal businesses.

Opponents of the program say these employers should hire locally. The H-2B program requires all employers wanting to apply for foreign workers to first advertise domestically. Proof of this has to be submitted.

"Do you want to know how many domestic applicants I have had that actually said they would take the job since 2006?" Talley asked. "Four. And when it came time for them to show up, they didn't."

Wood agreed. He simply cannot find enough domestic workers willing to go on the road. The current low unemployment rate, although good for the country, is not helping their challenges.

Opponents also have expressed that there is abuse in the program, but the program requires rigorous paperwork and oversight.

"And this program has been



lumped into the contentious issue of immigration," Wood said. "This is not an immigration program. This is a nonimmigrant program. When the visa runs out, they go home. There is no pathway to citizenship with this program."

Wood said language in the federal spending bill released Feb. 14, 2019, states the Secretary of Homeland Security, currently **Kirstjen Nielsen**, may increase the total number of visas by not more than the highest number of H-2B visas who participated in the H-2B returning worker program in any fiscal year.

Congress passed worker exemptions for fiscal years 2005, 2006, 2007, and 2016. The highest number of these exemptions was 69,320 in 2007. This new bill doesn't revive the returning worker exemption, but uses those numbers as a benchmark by which to establish an addition to the cap limit – in this case, 69,320.

Wood said that same lan-

guage was passed in December before the federal government shutdown.

"She (Nielsen) can release that number or anything up to that right now," Wood said. "But, we have no idea whether she will do anything or when."

Wood's operating season is basically divided into two parts. He normally applies for half his work force during the first half of the year. He received 20 workers so far, but applied for 20 more. He has no idea if he will get them or when. If he doesn't have a sufficient workforce, he will be forced to make some difficult decisions.

"And it is not just my business that gets hurt from this," he said. "It is all the other businesses down stream such as the fairs, the vendors, the suppliers."

Wood already had to put a delivery date on hold for a new 150-foot, **Lamberink**-manufactured wheel because he didn't know if he would have the workforce to run it. He will not have

that new ride for the 2019 season.

Talley hits the road early in the year so her applications go in the first cap. She was able to get approval for 80 foreign workers. But she worries about her colleagues.

"I don't know how in the world we are expected to invest millions of dollars in rides like we do when we have no idea what our workforce will be," Talley said.

There has been a lot of money going into lobbying and petitioning for a change in this program. Wood said the **Outdoor Amusement Business Association (OABA)** spends \$350,000 every year.

"I am involved with another association called the **Seasonal Employment Alliance**," he said. "That association is predominately landscapers and it spends about as much. I would guess that there has been \$100,000 spent every month on all things H-2B."



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AMUSEMENT VIEWS

AT NOTEBOOK: Gary Slade, gslade@amusementtoday.com

Positive start for AT's Safety section launch



Slade

This month AT begins its 23rd Volume of publishing news and information for the amusement industry. As the publication has grown, so has the area of content covered with carnivals, fairs, FEC's and even cruise ships now making up portions of our regular monthly print issue content.

Spreading this diverse editorial package around the various industry sectors also increases page count. Volume 22 (April 2018 to March 2019) consisted of a total of 842 pages, a high mark for AT, and up 86 pages from the previous volume.

The April edition also marks the beginning of our second year for featuring Safety, Maintenance & Operations as its own section. In the initial roll-out, 135 pages were featured, up 55 pages from the previous volume when safety news was included within the Business section.

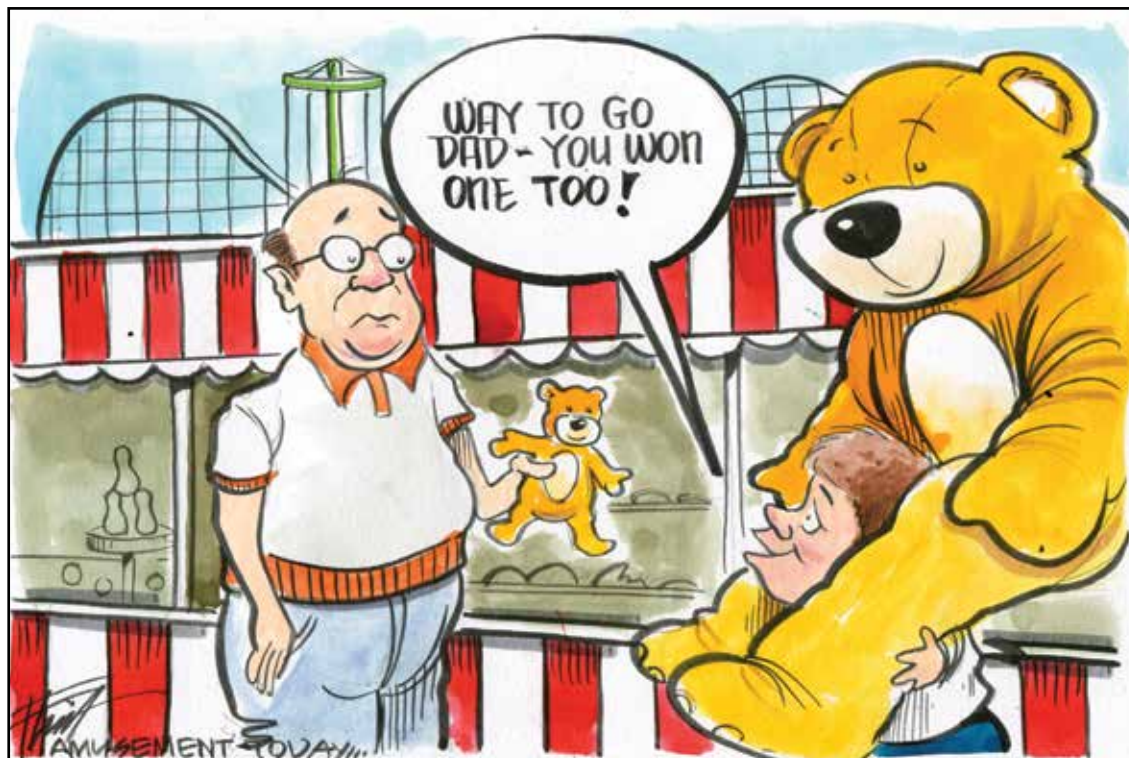
AT's commitment to safety included more than just page count, as it included extensive editorial coverage with print issue distribution at all of the major U.S. safety seminars — providing additional learning opportunities for attending students.

While the response from the industry has been met with huge positive feedback, we still need your help. Every facility has safety, maintenance and operations stories waiting to be told and shared with the industry. We can't publish and promote what we don't hear about, so please help keep us informed!

Email us at: editorial@amusementtoday.com to get a story or photo idea going. No rehab project, training method, or departmental program is too small to share. The best of ideas most often start small and grow into new industry standards.

Share the news (or photo) on your parks and help acknowledge your outstanding team members. We are just an email away.

FLINT'S VIEW: Bubba Flint



GUEST OPINION: Earl Heller, Rides-4-U

The FEC evolution

Born from the ashes of the nostalgic localized amusement parks the Family Entertainment Centers (FEC) have begun to emerge on the scene in new ways, and they are exactly as their name implies.

The FEC has been on a long journey, evolving along the way. The concept began in the form of a video arcade, capitalizing on the popularity of the video game madness of the 1980s. But the stand-alone arcade, popular as it was, proved to be a rather short-lived phenomenon. With more advanced gaming systems being introduced into consumers' homes, it became clear that if the FEC concept were to survive it needed to adapt.

And adapt it did. The modern day FEC is the result of innovative thinking, expanding it into a true year-round entertainment facility capable of providing something for everyone.

The FEC has not stopped in its ability to adapt and change. From adding lights and music to a classic bowling alley — creating a different evening experience than is offered in daylight hours — to changing its food court into a true restaurant with an ever-changing menu, the FEC's quest is to



Heller

deliver entertainment to its local clientele. FEC operators are experts in their ability to evolve with the times, delivering precisely what their regional guests are looking for.

These compact, year-round centers are uniquely poised to shift quickly to fluctuating times and trends. Their focus on indoor entertainment and software-driven additions allow them to continually add new and different attractions and provide a state-of-the-art experience, helping to keep guests coming back for more.

Trampoline parks, ropes courses, VR activities, simulators, and indoor rollercoasters are now a part of the experience at many FEC locations. Some operators have expanded their operations outdoors with thrill rides, zip lines, and full-fledged water parks. Growing in both size and scope, FECs are catering to the needs and demands of their local market.

The popularity and success of the FEC is evident in the crowds that walk through their doors each and every day, a testament to the success and ingenuity of their creators. It would be an understatement to call their adaptability anything short of remarkable and I have no doubt that the FEC is here to stay. Their continual innovation all but ensures it.

Opinions expressed on this page are those of the columnist(s) and do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher.

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2 MINUTE DRILL



AT: Janice Witherow

Jerry Aldrich, Amusement Industry Consulting

Is there anyone in the amusement industry who doesn't know **Jerry Aldrich**? An established leader and legend in the business, Jerry has made a name for himself during the 47 years he has worked in the industry. He was with the **Walt Disney Company** for 27 years and now is the general manager of **Amusement Industry Consulting** where he specializes in safety, risk management, maintenance and operational procedures. Jerry actively contributes to the industry on a global level, has earned numerous awards and has been involved with countless associations, committees and boards. He is always the first one to offer his expertise to continue to develop and improve an industry he has been deeply committed to his entire adult life.

Title: General Manager.

Number of years in the industry: 47

Best thing about the industry: The opportunity to develop relationships with interesting industry colleagues.

Favorite amusement ride: "Soarin' Around the World" in the Land Pavilion at Epcot.

If I wasn't working in the amusement industry, I would be ...

An over-the-road, long-haul truck driver.

Biggest challenge facing our industry: Qualified front line labor.

The thing I like most about amusement/water park season is ... The atmosphere of Christmas season in amusement/theme parks and the sights, sounds and smells of the midway at a State Fair.

When it comes to pizza, I order ... Pepperoni, mushrooms and sausage.

The last time I wore tennis shoes was ... This morning. I am nursing a healing stress fracture (right heel) in my orthopedic prescribed tennis shoes.

Cooler national sports mascot: Stuff with the Orlando Magic (NBA).

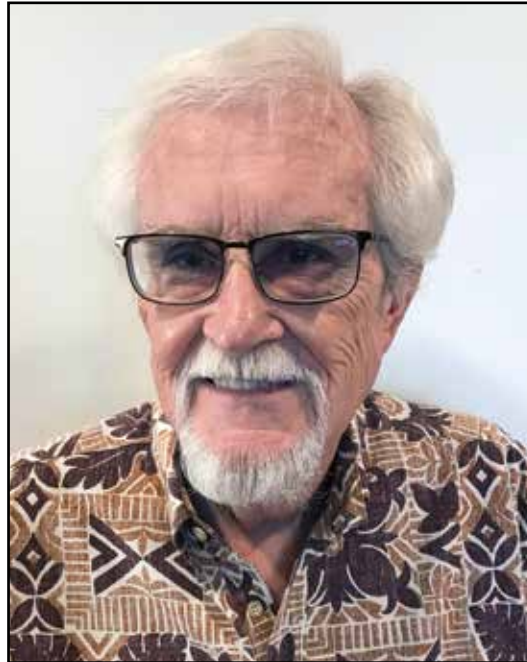
Pick one: steak or lobster: Steak.

When it comes to Orlando, people are always surprised to learn ... It is the third most populous urbanized area in Florida and home to one of the largest universities in the United States.

My favorite Sunday morning activity is ... Going to church.

Outside of my office window, I see ... A picturesque lake with the Sea World Sky Tower on the horizon.

My biggest pet peeve: People who think posted rules are for everyone but them.



Industry veteran Jerry Aldrich has made a name name for himself after enjoying a 47-year career.

COURTESY JERRY ALDRICH

My childhood ambition was to ... Prepare for a career that would allow me to depart my small hometown of 63 homes and a population of 2,250. True, there was actually a state penitentiary in our small town!

When I meet someone for the first time, the first thing I notice is ... Their body language. Shy, angry, annoyed, etc., to better understand how to start a conversation.

When I daydream, I usually find myself thinking of ... Unfinished projects.

When driving, I typically listen to: Country music.

The best place I have ever eaten ice cream would have to be ... Martha's Ice Cream; across the highway from Six Flags Great Escape in Lake George, New York.

When in the grocery store, do you have a list or just grab what you need? Both. I usually start with a list, but do adlib after that.

The song that makes me want to dance: "Chances Are" by Johnny Mathis.

My television is usually turned to this channel ... An "in season" sports channel.

If I had an extra week in the year I would spend it ... Traveling by car on secondary highways through rural America.

I love to talk about ... My family, amusement industry experiences and industry opportunities.

Parks and companies can submit nominations

New industry categories for Golden Ticket Awards

Following the conclusion of the summer season, the 22nd annual **Golden Ticket Awards** will take place Sept. 6 & 7 in Idaho. As *Amusement Today* works to evolve the awards, some categories will be retired, and new ones will offer fresh perspectives.



"The Golden Ticket Awards have served us well for more than two decades," said Publisher **Gary Slade**. "We don't intend to lose sight of that. However, we have wanted to give things a refresh for some time. We are going to keep our core categories, retire some that we feel have run their course and introduce some new categories we feel are deserving. This year's awards ceremony should be very exciting."

Golden Ticket Legends will honor individuals and attractions that have reached legendary status deserving of acknowledgement.

Industry professionals will be able to have an impact on some awards this year. Suppliers and parks can submit nominations in certain categories.

Innovation of the Year will acknowledge any new product, service or procedure in the industry that shows innovative improvement, safety or an increase in customer service or sales.

Nominees for **Best New Attraction Installation** can be submitted from suppliers. New attractions must be installed and operating when submitted. Consideration will be given to technology, theming, operation and impact.

Interested parties can make nominations to *Amusement Today* to be evaluated by an industry panel formed by the AT staff. Nominations should be written in 300 words or less and submitted to Tim Baldwin at tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com

All nominations should be received by June 30. When submitting, please use "GTA Nomination" as the subject line. A confirmation will be sent when received.

A modification of a previous category, Best Shows, will now become **Best New Show of 2019**. Any park wishing to nominate a new-for-2019 show may do so by using an electronic transfer method to a video of the show. Nominations should be received by June 30 for a review.

The Golden Ticket Awards were established in 1998 to recognize the Best of the Best and have become some of the most recognized accolades in the world of amusements.

THE INDUSTRY SEEN

Building the dream of flight



WEST CHESTER, Ohio — The iFLY Indoor Skydiving experience is working to open its first Ohio location just outside of Cincinnati. Currently under construction at the Liberty Center mixed-use complex along I-75 and Ohio 129, the facility's unique structure has been turning heads. The entertainment company has 48 facilities operating worldwide with 36 owned in the U.S. The architecture for its forthcoming Cincinnati location is an update compared to its designs at previous locations. Construction crews topped out the location in late Jan., with the facility planning to open in late Spring of 2019. AT/JOHN W.C. ROBINSON

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PARKS, FAIRS & ATTRACTIONS

► Busch Gardens Tampa's 60th anniversary celebration — page 10 / FAIRS — page 20

After 18 years of work, volunteer group reopens PTC carousel #9

AT: B. Derek Shaw
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POTTSTOWN, Pa. — The laughter and merriment from children of all ages is alive and well at **The Carousel at Pottstown**. However, that effort took 18 years and the dedication of dozens of volunteers to make it happen.

This three-row menagerie carousel has an extensive history. Originally built in 1905 by the **Philadelphia Toboggan Company** and designated #9, it first took up residence at **Euclid Beach Park**, Cleveland, Ohio. After four years it went to **Laurel Springs Amusement Park**, Hartford, Conn., where it stayed until 1925. That year the carousel was returned to PTC to be updated with jumping animals and two chariots, also getting renamed as #74R. The next year, it was at **Kauffman's Park**, Mount Gretna, Pa., where it remained for three years. From 1929 to 1964, **Joyland Park**, Lexington, Ky. was its home, followed by **Twin Grove Park**, Pine Grove, Pa., until closing sometime in the mid-1970s. It was during the early 1980s that the carousel was dismantled with the animals being sold at auction. The remains went to a private collector in Dallastown, Pa.

George Wausnock is a volunteer who has been with the project since the beginning. It all got started when Wausnock was president of the **Pottstown Historic Society**. The group was asked to provide a display of historic photographs of the local area for a home builders show in the town's **Sunnybrook Ballroom**. The theme that year was carousels, with a portable one outside the show. "On this cold, windy March day, I observed parents on the outside of Sunnybrook Ballroom putting their kids on the horses. It was raining, it was damp. I thought, wouldn't it be nice to have a carousel inside, somewhere near

downtown Pottstown. It would be great for economic development and tourism."

The operator who brought the portable unit told Wausnock about the PTC #9's carousel mechanism, rounding boards, sweeps and platform that were available about 80 miles west of Pottstown. The Carousel at Pottstown is a non-profit that was formed at that time, approaching the historical society for financial backing to purchase the carousel remains and transport to the city.

"It came in so many ugly parts. Most of the animals were sold off over the years," said Wausnock.

New animals were commissioned from **Ed Roth**, owner of **A&E Sculpting and Paint Studio**, Los Alamitos, Calif. Roth, a master sculptor, had previously done work for **Seabreeze Amusement Park**, Rochester, N.Y., and **Disney parks**. He also restored the **Smithsonian Institute's** carousel that is down the road at the **Please Touch Museum** in Philadelphia, Pa. "We had to have all these [animals] replicated to match the early Philadelphia Toboggan Company carousel." Since the local group was in no hurry, Roth worked on a few at a time between larger projects.

As the carving portion was completed, the animals were shipped to Pottstown where an army of volunteers worked on sanding and painting each one of them. One volunteer, **Bob Roebuck**, stood out.

"Every animal that came in, he hand sanded. Unfortunately he is blind. That's why it took so long," said Wausnock. "The volunteers that wanted to paint these animals took them home; they took them to their office; they took them to their businesses. People painted them when they could paint them." Each horse has nearly 250 hours of volunteer time to complete.



This painstaking process took 18 years to accomplish.

Locals getting weary on the progress wondered when the nearly two-decade restoration project was going to be completed. "I felt like Michelangelo for years. They said George, 'When? When George?' I had brown hair when this thing started!" added the now grey-haired Wausnock. "Now they have embraced it — they just love it. They are so proud of this carousel being here in Pottstown."

From an 18-year work-in-progress to a magnificently restored machine, the Carousel at Pottstown has quickly become one of the crowning jewels of this southeastern Pennsylvania city enjoyed by all who visit.

The Carousel at Pottstown opened for the first time for riders in Dec. 2016. The attraction is visited by locals as well as people around the region. Birthday parties, receptions, reunions, meetings, as well as corporate and community events fill the operation schedule. There are frequent tour buses, including many from Maryland, Delaware and Virginia. Some visitors are on a "mysterious bus tour" and the carousel happens to be one of the stops. Free off-street parking is available on site.

Located in a nearly

The entire carousel took volunteers 18 years to complete. At right, a close up of one of the animals that was carved by Ed Roth, A&E Sculpting and Paint Studio. COURTESY ALAN MACBAIN



10,000-square-foot vintage building that once housed a welding operation, the structure is now owned by the borough of Pottstown and leased to the historic society. In the past, the building was used to restore railroad cars along with other items requiring welding work. Now, in addition to the carousel, the restored building houses an entrance area/gift shop, arcade machines, a corn-hole game, a snack bar located in an 1860s horse-drawn trolley and numerous band organs on loan from several individuals.

The complete operation is maintained through the help of more than two dozen volunteers who perform different tasks including ride operations, ride/animal maintenance, gift shop operations, marketing and custodial services.

The carousel is dedicated to **Derek Scott Saylor**, who tragically passed at the young age of

only two years old. Saylor's parents were the first to give a sizeable donation for the carousel project. The young boy's picture can be seen in the gift shop above the entrance to the carousel.

Coming this summer, the carousel will add one of its fanciest animals. The group owns a rearing hippocampus (or sea horse) which is currently in the process of being painted prior to its forthcoming addition to the indoor menagerie.

Directly behind the building is an outdoor miniature golf course that the borough has given to the operation along with a hot dog stand. There are plans for an outdoor patio, additional party rooms and a catering kitchen. The group also hopes to add a small eight or twelve seat Ferris wheel directly east of the building as an additional attraction for visitors in warmer months.

• carouselatpottstown.org

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Climate-controlled addition expands property

The Park at OWA to add new Sally dark ride

AT: Tim Baldwin
tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com

FOLEY, Ala. — **The Park at OWA**, which opened in 2017, continues into its third season with a new dark ride on tap for the summer season. The installation echoes the growth of the entire OWA resort area. The development has seen its shopping and dining options fill the Downtown area, while the **Marriott Townhouse Suites** and adjacent sports complex continue to host visitors and groups to the Foley location.

"One of the things we know from the guest feedback from our last two years of operation is that heat and weather are factors that sometimes impact people's opinions," said **Kristin Helmich**, director of marketing, OWA. "Having an indoor dark ride would be a great addition to allow us to maximize the enjoyment in the park and experience all we have to offer."

For their second season, The Park at OWA installed a splash pad last year to help keep the heat at bay as well.

Florida-based **Sally Corp.** will be the supplier for the new dark ride. The Ghost Blasters-style model has been a successful product for Sally, with more than 10 parks housing versions of the attraction. According to the dark ride company, OWA's iteration will encompass the best scenes and gags of previous versions, plus a few new surprises added in.

"Ride repeatability is a major goal of any of Sally's interactive dark rides, and a huge amount of the repeatability is due to the competitive element," said **Drew Hunter**, VP of creative development, Sally. "No two experiences will be quite the same. It's always fun for guests to see if they can

out-score the others in their vehicle."

Four-passenger ride cars will take riders through 13 whimsical and spooky rooms of the haunted mansion, all rendered in glowing, surrealistically colorful ultraviolet paint. "It's a vibrantly distinct cartoonish look that screams fun," said Hunter.

The ride will be located between the park's Crazy Mouse and Alabama Whamma (a **Zamperla** Endeavor) and use a small portion of employee parking. Management considers this the "thrill ride" side of the park.

The name of the ride is **Mystic Mansion**. "We allowed our guests to vote on the name from three choices," said Helmich, mentioning The Park at OWA wanted to engage the guests on name selection.

The decision to purchase the ride was made during the IAAPA Expo last November. Both Sally and OWA have worked quickly since.

"While this is a traditional theme of ours, none of our dark rides are exactly the same," said **Lauren Wood Weaver**, director of marketing and communications, Sally Corp. "We are building from the ground up. Because we have done iterations of this style of ride before, it allowed us to work with The Park at OWA on such a fast-paced timeline."

The park will be responsible for the construction of the building, which is in process. Once completed, Sally is prepared to move scenes, the ride system and targets — all heavily in production — into the project.

"There are some new special effects and gags that have not been used in the past in our Ghost Blasters," said Weaver. "We know there are classic

gags that work, and we've used some gags in our newer rides that have been really effective. We are constantly evolving this black light haunt interactive product of ours."

The Park at OWA is one component of the resort complex that houses the Downtown dining and retail area, a lakeside amphitheater and other recreation activities. Downtown OWA is open daily year-round and does not require admission to The Park at OWA. A new indoor, 400-seat theater is opening this summer in OWA, which will feature the famous Legends In Concert impersonation performances.

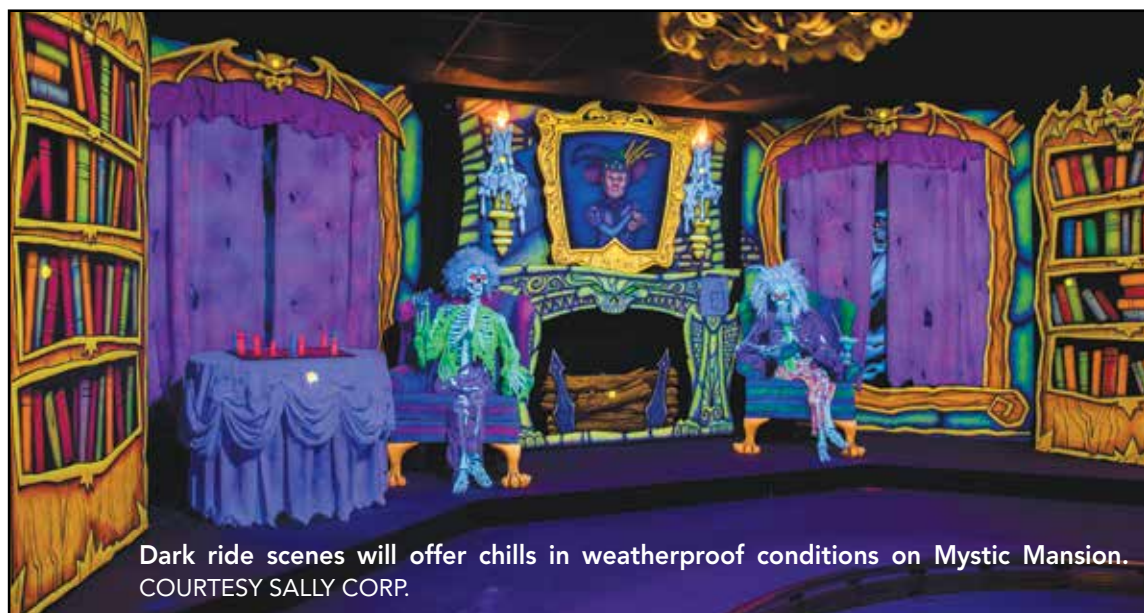
Much of the park's attendance base is derived from the adjacent sports field complex also located in Foley. Another new decision made for 2019 is a throwback to numerous amusement parks of yesteryear. Guests who are not inclined to ride the rides — chaperones, retirees, grandparents, etc. — will not be required to purchase an All-You-Can-Ride admission but will be admitted for free.

In a few short years, the complex is showing big growth, spotlighted this season by **Mystic Manor**.

"We're really excited to bring this ride to Alabama. We educate our client on what we need in terms of electrical and air and walls to guide their architecture," said Weaver. "We can take over from there. We come in with the ride and show."

Even with the fast construction pace, park management is targeting Memorial Day weekend for the opening.

"We are looking to hit that date, so guests can come in starting the season off with a great new ride," said Helmich.



Dark ride scenes will offer chills in weatherproof conditions on Mystic Mansion. COURTESY SALLY CORP.

THE HUBLESS WHEEL

IT'S A BIG DEAL!



Record-breaking details released of conversion of shuttered coaster

Busch Gardens Tampa Bay kicks off 60th anniversary celebration

AT: David Fake
Special to Amusement Today

TAMPA, Fla. — On Friday, March 1, **Busch Gardens Tampa Bay** kicked off its "60th Celebration" commemorating a diamond anniversary of operation. A media briefing highlighted several aspects of the year-long party including the return of free beer samples, the launch of the park's new pin trading program, and the announcement of new details of the wood-steel hybrid roller coaster conversion of the currently closed wooden coaster, Gwazi.

When the original Busch Gardens opened on March 31, 1959, as an admission-free tourist attraction, it was little more than a simple bird garden on the grounds of an **Anheuser-Busch** brewery, where guests could relax while sampling free beer at the conclusion of a brewery tour. Paying homage to those roots, the park has dubbed this anniversary year as a "Year of Beer," or #YearofBeer, in which of-age guests can partake in two complimentary sample-size beers with each visit to the park.

Being rolled out at the same time as Year of Beer is the park's new Pin Trading program which includes more than 150 original collectible pins. Many of the pin's designs are inspired by fan-favorite rides and animal residents of the park. There are also outside party licensed pins available from companies who have partnered with the park. Many of the pins can be purchased at the park, but some can only be obtained by trading with park employees and ambassadors who are



As the sun sets on Gwazi, Busch Gardens Tampa Bay has announced Rocky Mountain Construction will convert the wooden coaster into a record breaking hybrid (right) for 2020. COURTESY BUSCH GARDENS; AT/DAVID FAKE



provided with limited quantity "chaser" pins with the express intent of getting them out and into circulation.

"Guests seem particularly fond of the Official Sesame Street Pins that were designed exclusively for the park by **Sesame Workshop** [formerly **The Children's Television Workshop**]," said **Becky Dempsey**, Busch Gardens' Merchandise Department Trainer. When asked why Busch Gardens decided to start a Pin Trading program now, when other parks have had them for years, Dempsey said to *Amusement Today*, "Disney has had a Pin Trading program since 1999, but we didn't want to get in the game until we knew we could do it right, and now we are ready."

To conclude the media portion of the event, **Andrew Schaffer**, Busch Gardens' director of design and engineering, introduced a video montage of Busch Gardens Tampa Bay's record-breaking thrill rides. Tigris, Florida's tallest launch coaster (a **Premier Rides** Sky Rocket



II), was spotlighted for 2019, which opens later this spring. However, the final 30 seconds of the video drew the most reaction from the audience when it was officially announced, within a short point-of-view animation segment, that **Rocky Mountain Construction** would be performing a hybrid conversion on the standing-but-not-operating Gwazi roller coaster, the world's first dueling wooden coaster. A name for the new ride has not yet been announced, but it will be North America's tallest hybrid roller coaster, and the steepest, fastest hybrid coaster in the world when it opens in 2020.

It had long been rumored after the closure of the ride in 2015 that a Rocky Mountain Construction conversion

was in the works, especially after the coaster remained standing on prime real estate in the park long after its closure. Rocky Mountain Construction Group was formed in 2001, and quickly became a highly sought-after ride designer by parks across the globe after the design of their Topper and IBox tracks. The company has been behind successful new and converted coasters such as New Texas Giant at **Six Flags Over Texas**, Outlaw Run at **Silver Dollar City**, and Steel Vengeance at **Cedar Point**.

Shaffer, would make no further comment on the ride at the time, but ended by saying, "The future of our park is very thrilling, and we look forward to sharing all the exciting details with you as the excitement builds."

The 60th Celebration continued on Gwazi field with a proclamation by Tampa Mayor, **Bob Buckhorn**, that March 2019 officially be known as "Busch Gardens Tampa Bay Month." The proclamation was followed by a

90-minute-long concert by the **Florida Symphony** featuring **Women Rock**, a rousing tribute to female artists who shaped the rock 'n' roll industry and gave a nod to the beginning of Women's History Month. The 60th Celebration kickoff event culminated with a 20-minute synchronized fireworks display.

Long-gone is the brewery (it closed in 1995 and was later demolished to make room for that new wooden dueling roller coaster, Gwazi), and the park is no longer owned by **Anheuser-Busch/InBev** (they sold the Busch Gardens/SeaWorld parks to the Blackstone Group in 2009). However, in the six decades since it opened, Busch Gardens Tampa Bay has evolved into a world-class amusement park, zoo, entertainment and tourist destination that continues to entertain and thrill with award-winning animal exhibits and experiences, shows and record-breaking attractions. 60 never looked so good.

• buschgardens.com/tampa



The Florida Symphony and Women Rock performed a 90-minute concert as part of the 60th anniversary celebration (left). The park has also released a limited edition chaser pin (middle). For 2019, the track on the park's newest coaster, Tigris, has been completed (right) and will open in the weeks ahead for the park's 60th celebration. COURTESY BUSCH GARDENS; AT/DAVID FAKE



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DP Leisure opens seventh 360 Play at Rushden Lakes

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE, U.K. — Following in the footsteps of its six existing venues, **DP Leisure** (DPL), operator of the **360 Play** family entertainment center brand, opened its seventh U.K. site on Feb. 13 at Rushden Lakes in Northamptonshire.

An established and successful name within the U.K.'s children's entertainment center sector — with sites in Milton Keynes, Stevenage, Leicester, Basildon, Redditch and Farnborough — the latest addition from DPL is located at **Rushden Lakes Shopping Center**, a unique venue offering a mixture of retail, lakeside restaurants, cafés and leisure options.

The site is owned by the **Crown Estate** which in conjunction with property development company **LXB Properties** is working to develop the Rushden Lakes scheme. The addition of 360 Play brings yet another key leisure offering to the venue as it continues to build on its reputation as a fun and entertaining destination for families.



Designed by sister company **DP Associates** (DPA), the newest 360 Play center is housed in a 20,000-square-foot unit.

The attractions at 360 Play Rushden Lakes include a multi-level central play frame from **SPI Global Play**, a dodgem car track and carousel from **IE Park/SOLI Bumper Cars** and the creative play area dubbed **360 Street** — a series of play shops and other buildings, including a supermarket, pizza parlour, vets and pets, fire station, garage and more — all designed and built in-house in workshops at the company's headquarters premises in Milton Keynes.

Trans Studio Bali announces Road Rage



LEGACY
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ROAD RAGE

JAKARTA, Indonesia — Trans Studio has revealed details on the first of several signature attractions in the works. **Road Rage**, the signature dark ride that will serve as an anchor attraction at Trans Studio Bali, is being billed as the world's first "Stunt Show Dark Ride." The attraction will break new ground with its integration of live performers and high-octane stunts. Trans Studio enlisted Legacy Entertainment for design and production. The attraction will feature a dynamic ride system from Oceaneering as well as a pulse-pounding original musical score by Benoit Jutras, famed composer of Cirque du Soleil and Dragone. COURTESY LEGACY ENTERTAINMENT

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Mobile petting zoo finding new business in shoulder seasons

Honey Hill Farm brings low-tech, real experiences to parks

AT: Tim Baldwin

tbaldwin@amusementtoday.com

BERRY, Kentucky — Parks pride themselves on the biggest rides, newest innovations and the latest technology. However, alongside all the technical wizardry the amusement industry is so famous for, certain throwback entertainment is finding renewed popularity.

Kentucky-based **Honey Hill Farm** originated in 1998. Originally started as a resource for providing animals and petting zoos for events, the company has since grown into being a go-to resource for the amusement industry. The founding mission of the family-owned business is to provide access to animals to families who otherwise wouldn't have it. A connection to animals is genuine.

HONEY HILL FARM Animal Attractions

The smallest events, such as birthday parties, might have as little as 10 animals, but a larger event might request up to 60.

"We have over 500 animals," **Megan Powell-Larkin**, director of marketing, told *Amusement Today*.

"Technology is fantastic, virtual reality is a lot of fun, all the things you can do in an amusement park such as cutting-edge rides ... is all wonderful, but almost all of it is going to appeal for a spe-



Trail rides are offered at Snoopy's Barnyard Friends at Kings Island. COURTESY HONEY HILL FARM

cific group," Powell-Larkin said. "You have to have a lot of those things for all of them. Petting zoos have a mass appeal. Everyone likes them — from toddlers to teenagers to grandparents."

The company points out that often venues underestimate the amount of difficulty that goes into taking care of animals. It believes it shouldn't be up to a seasonal hire who simply might have been assigned to that task. Honey Hill Farm provides the staffing to serve as caretaker to the animals at each event.

"We do everything on building the attraction or we consult heavily with [the client]," she said. "We want the park to be happy and provide the experience."

As seasons fluctuate, the company has a pool of animal caretakers. Powell-Larkin explains that numerous staff members are college students who have taken training in animal care and are pursuing careers in veterinary studies. In many ways, it reflects the operating seasons of theme parks. Because of the unique nature of the job requirements, interested candidates often seek out the roles because such opportunities are relatively limited. Cincinnati and Lexington provide a population base from which to draw qualified staffing.

From its simple beginnings, Honey Hill Farm has seen significant growth in recent years in the amusement industry. Installations in parks are deemed low cost/high impact in their reach. Installations are relatively inexpensive for a new attraction and can be placed in under-utilized areas of the park.

"We have worked with **Cedar Point** since 2014. When they first contacted us to take over the petting zoo, that was a totally foreign concept at first. They used to have a small petting zoo — some goats, chickens and sheep — which was kind of under-utilized. They made a move in 2014 to beef up Frontier Trail and do this family attraction thing," Powell-Larkin said. "We came in and worked with them to redesign and improve the petting zoo. It's really a major attraction now. They

have over 60 animals."

From there, **Cedar Fair** became a bigger client. **Michigan's Adventure**, **Kings Dominion**, **Kings Island** and **Carowinds** have contracted with Honey Hill Farm. **Camden Park** is also a client, as well as Ohio's **Coney Island**. At four of the parks, trail rides are offered on full-size horses. All of the parks allow guests to feed the animals, keeping the experience interactive.

"We will also be working with **Worlds of Fun** this year," she said. "Amusement parks are the biggest part of our business now. We've added one to two new parks every year for the past five years."

The holiday event Winterfest at Cedar Fair parks has become a new spike in business, extending the shoulder season to where the down months have been greatly reduced.

"There's an animal connection with Christmas because of nativities. That's always been a thing at our mobile events with churches," said Powell-Larkin. "There's been a movement with amusement parks to do more Christmas events. Rides can't operate when it is sleeting, obviously, but animals go really well with families."

For numerous years, Honey Hill Farm focused on serving Ohio, Kentucky and Indiana, but has now found their reach has grown exponentially. The company no longer feels it has traditional borders.

Animal welfare is essential to the company's core values. In 2018 it introduced the **Honey Hill Farm Foundation for Animal Welfare**. The animals live on a 150-acre farm and, despite the name, serves only to take care of the animals, it does not produce crops or raise livestock. The only animals taken in are those that can thrive on the Kentucky farm environment.

A common misconception might be that petting zoos appeal only to younger children.

"You'd be surprised how many people, such as season pass holders, say that the petting zoo is always the one thing they have to do," Powell-Larkin said. "They get to know the animals by name. People email us in the winter to ask how their favorite animal is doing and when they can expect them back [at the park.] I'm not sure toddlers love it any more than teenagers do. Everybody gets into it."

•honeyhillfarm.net



The Barnyard at Cedar Point in 2014. COURTESY HONEY HILL FARM



Michigan's Adventure introduced Funland Farm in 2016. COURTESY HONEY HILL FARM

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Park Post-its



AT: Pam Sherborne
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Merlin Entertainments has opened a **Peppa Pig World of Play** attraction in the Dallas-Fort Worth, Texas, area, the first in the United States. This opening is following a successful launch of the inaugural Peppa Pig World of Play in Shanghai last October.

Merlin has an exclusive multi-territory licensing agreement with **Entertainment One**, owner of the Peppa Pig brand. Merlin is building and operating the attractions, targeted at the pre-school market as part of its broader strategy to engage in partnerships.

The new U.S. center comprises 14,000 square feet of standalone, indoor play space located in the **Grapevine Mills** mall and offers 10 immersive play areas.

A second site is set to open in Michigan before the end of 2019.

Candytopia, the candy-coated adventure that has drawn over a half a million guests since opening its first location, has brought its confectionery wonderland to **Mall of America**, Bloomington, Minn., for a limited engagement that began early last month.

Candytopia features more than 12 rooms with larger-than-life interactive art installations and full sensory experiences.

The mini-theme park launched in 2018 in Santa Monica, Calif., followed by two successful runs in San Francisco, Calif., and New York City. It just recently opened in Atlanta.

Candytopia is a peek inside famed celebrity candy artist, **Jackie Sorkin**. It was created in partnership with co-founders **Zac Hartog**, CEO of **ZH Productions**, and retail veteran **John Goodman**.

Quassy Amusement and Waterpark, Middlebury, Conn., is partnering with **Give Kids The World Village (GKTW)**, a central Florida-based nonprofit that fulfills wishes for critically ill children and their families, to stage a **Coasting for Kids** event on Saturday, June 8.

Participants who raise or donate at least \$100 in support of GKTW will receive a special Coasting for Kids pass allowing exclusive morning ride time on Quassy's award-winning Wooden Warrior coaster.

In addition, the park will operate its classic **Allan Herschell** Little Dipper steel coaster for exclusive rides, beginning at 10 a.m.

All money raised by participants will go to GKTW to help the organization provide dream vacations to critically ill children and their families.

Permit applications filed by **Walt Disney Co.** at the first of February appear to be the beginning of the work on the company's new nature-themed resort, according to a story in the Orlando Business Journal.

The Disney Co. announced the construc-

tion of the new **Reflections: A Lakeside Resort** last year. A planned 900-room resort along Bay Lake, the new area is scheduled to welcome families in 2022.

Located between **Disney's Wilderness Lodge** and **Disney's Fort Wilderness Resort & Campground**, this resort project joins three others underway at Walt Disney World Resort, bringing a total of more than 1,700 new hotel rooms and proposed Disney Vacation Club villas online over the next four years.

The deluxe resort, which will be themed to complement its natural surroundings, will include more than 900 hotel rooms.

Reflections: A Disney Lakeside Resort will be Disney's 16th property. Site plans filed with the county show construction of the new site was to begin in early 2019.

Bounce, a leading trampoline park operator in the Philippines, has opened a brand new facility in **SM North EDSA**, a large shopping mall located in Quezon City, Metro Manila.

Bounce offers a complete entertainment experience for active groups of all ages within a trampoline park environment.

Specialty areas focus on movement, fitness and physical activity. To date, the following are just some of the areas featured in Bounce SM North: foam pits, battle beam, ninja course, giant slide and ball pit, dodgeball and basketball and sports.

Bounce also includes an event center for hosting birthday parties, corporate events, team building and other group fitness activities.

Bounce was built by **IREC** and **Powered by IPLAYCO**.

Las Vegas-based **Allegiant Nonstop** plans to open a \$9 million, 100,000-square-foot indoor family entertainment center near **Universal Mall** in Warren, Mich., by the end of this month (April).

The facility will feature two, nine-hole black-light mini golf putting greens, a 14-foot climbing wall with hand and foot holds, electric go-karts with several turns and straightaways on a 460-foot track, two-level laser tag and laser maze, 10 bowling lanes, bumper cars, a toddler area, virtual reality games, three escape rooms and 120-plus arcade games.

Allegiant's first center opened last month in Clearfield, Utah. It looks for spaces formerly occupied by big-box retail outlets to bring in activities for neighborhoods lacking options for family entertainment.

Amid a legal battle with HBO's "Leaving Neverland," **Michael Jackson's** estate relisted the **Neverland** property in Los Olivos, Calif., where the late pop star lived for 15 years. But, the price has come down considerably. The current listing price is \$31 million, nearly \$70 million less than its original listing from 2015.

Neverland, which is co-owned by the star's estate and fund management company **Colony Capital**, is comprised of 2,700 acres and a nearly 12,000-square-foot main house. It was first purchased by the King of Pop in 1987 for \$19.5 million.

Jackson died in 2009. Six years after his passing, his estate and the fund manager put up the property for sale. The asking price at that time was \$100 million.

Since then, his family has struggled to sell the property, which now goes by Sycamore Valley Ranch. In 2017, they switched listing agents and reduced the asking price to \$67 million, according to The Wall Street Journal.

2019 is the Year of Magic at Italy's Gardaland Resort

MILAN, Italy — A Year of Magic began March 30 at **Gardaland Resort** in celebration of the new enchanting additions greeting guests this year.

According to Gardaland Resort's public relations spokespersons, included among the new 2019 features are the **Foresta Incantata** (The Enchanted Forest), the re-opening of the **Sequoia Magic Loop**, the "Magic Elements" and a new addition to the **Sea Life Aquarium**.

Guests also may get a good look at the new Gardaland Magic Hotel, a fully themed four-star hotel dedicated to magic, that is expected to open May 31.

Guests get their first glimpse at the new additions right out of the gate, i.e., the front entrance. There, the welcome show has a brand new sound track as winged fairies and "knights of the enchanted realm" dance.

From there, guests may enter the new **Foresta Incantata**, a walk-through attraction. Entering under a large wizard's hat, visitors begin their journey along a story line of helping the Wizard of Gardaland save the Magic Forest, which is full of magic plants and flowers, talking trees, giant mushrooms and fantastic creatures.

Also for this season, Gardaland has reopened the **Sequoia Magic Loop** coaster that was closed during the 2018 season due to mechanical issues. The **S&S Sansei Technologies** coaster has a height of 30 meters (98.4 feet) from the ground and features three inversions. The single car trains seat two riders across in two rows for a total of four riders per car. It has operated at Gardaland since 2005.

Another new addition for 2019 is "Magic Elements," a theater show on the stage of **PalaMagic**. It features video mapping special effects, water and fire games, theatrical py-

rotechnic fires and many other surprises.

The increasingly popular themed **Peppa Pig Land** now has two new characters available for photo opportunities, **Suzy Sheep** and **Danny Dog**.

Gardaland Sea Life Aquarium hasn't been missed for something new in 2019. A new sea horse water tank is greeting guests to the aquarium.

Gardaland Sea Life is a part of an international task force that constantly monitors the situation of seas worldwide in order to protect and preserve the delicate sea horse species. Gardaland's aquarium doesn't acquire or capture sea horses in open sea. Park experts breed them in aquariums on site.

The **Gardaland Magic Hotel**, a 20-million-euro investment (over \$22.5 million) will include 128 large rooms themed in three different settings: **Foresta Incantata**, **Cristallo Magico** (Magic Ice Castle) and **Grand Mago** (Wizard House). Each room will be divided in two different areas with a double bed on one side and two single beds on the other side.

Guests staying in the **Foresta Incantata** will feel like inhabitants of a magic forest. Adults will be sleeping at the feet of an imposing talking tree while children will be spending the night under astonishing giant mushrooms, flowers and amusing vine entanglements.

Those choosing to stay in a **Cristallo Magico** (Magic Ice Castle) room will be spending the night inside a castle of dazzling ice. In the **Grande Mago** rooms, guests will sleep under a large wizard's house while children become apprentices of the great wizard.

The Gardaland Magic Hotel is located near the other two hotels of the resort, **Gardaland Hotel** and **Gardaland Adventure Hotel**.

—Pam Sherborne



Gardaland Magic Hotel will include 128 large themed rooms.
COURTESY GARDALAND

Land of Legends coming to Bobbejaanland in 2019

BELGIUM — Leisure Expert Group announced that it has been involved with the creation of **Bobbejaanland's** new area: Land of Legends

The new themed area is scheduled to open in 2019. The land will consist of a newly built **Gerstlauer** infinity coaster, the existing Typhoon coaster and the Sledgehammer giant frisbee. The concept for the new area was created by Leisure Expert Group.

This is Leisure Expert Group's first project with Bobbejaanland. The park was well aware of what they were looking for in the new land and about what target group it wished to aim for.

During the design of Land of Legends, Leisure Expert Group was inspired by popular video games and super hero movies. The company tried to create a special realm of interactivity, where the help of guests is needed to protect the four elements of water, fire, earth and air from evil.

The Leisure Expert Group

has created the design for the area which consisted of a storyline synopsis and some sketches based on the market research conducted by Bobbejaanland. After approval, the company began with designing the thematic elements such as the statues and coaster stations in elevations.

•leisureexpertgroup.com

Bounce About Laser Tag adds Intercard

ST. LOUIS, Mo. — Retired schoolteacher Danielle Mirabal made a big leap when she left the classroom to run Bounce About Laser Tag, an FEC in Toms River, N.J. Now, Intercard has helped Mirabal make the jump to cashless technology. With the ability to accept credit cards as well as cash for game play, Mirabal saw a jump in arcade revenue. "I want to say it's been at least a 40 percent increase," Mirabal stated. "We were only able to [accept] cash before and we would lose business." **COURTESY INTERCARD**



The collaboration on the Land of Legends, marks the first between Bobbejaanland and Leisure Expert Group. Themebuilders Philippines and 2Create will produce the scenic elements created for the project under Bobbejaanland's supervision. **COURTESY LEISURE ENTERTAINMENT GROUP**

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Above, a new Technical Park ride called Squadron 33 will be one of four new acquisitions. At right, the park has invested in an upgraded Double Shot as it is one of the park's most popular and visible rides.
 COURTESY PLAYLAND'S CASTAWAY COVE

Playland's Castaway Cove adds four new rides

OCEAN CITY, N.J. — After changing the beachfront skyline of Ocean City in 2017 with striking new signature roller coasters, Playland's Castaway Cove is adding more fun for 2019.

For its 60th anniversary, the park will add four rides for visitors enjoying vacation thrills. One is actually a replacement of a popular attraction Playland's Castaway Cove already owns. In February, a new Double Shot (S&S Worldwide) was installed.

"We had a Double Shot we purchased in [the late 1990s], and we like to keep things updated," said **Brian Hartley**, vice president. "We have replaced it with one of the same size. We found that people really liked the action of this ride, so we didn't feel the need to go taller. At that point it becomes more of a drop tower, rather than the push up-pull down. They had some newer updates of the shoulder restraints and safety systems, which is good when you are upgrading equipment."

Squadron 33 (Technical Park) places control of the ride experience in the hands of its pilots. The circular ride sports single-seat vehicles designed to look like airplanes that give each rider the ability to maneuver his or her craft using the wings, including the possibility of going upside down. All this action takes place as the ride rises to a 45-degree angle.

"Some rides [with joysticks] have more than one seat, and everyone wants to control the ride," said Hartley.

A new three-lane Super Slide (**Darttron**) is a throwback to an older slide the park retired a few years ago to make room for the coasters. Kids — as well as adults — climb 22 feet to take the journey to the bottom on burlap bags. Of note, because the slide is placed on an elevated platform, the view for riders will be 32 feet above the ground.

"It took some creative engineering to find a spot for it," Hartley said. "We're happy to make that work. It's really not a ride we wanted to take out. It's a classic ride and you find all ages on it."

The Musik Express Rock 'n Roll (**Bertazzon**) is a midway classic that sends passengers up and around the undulating circular course. As speed increases, riders swing up and out as each car is attached via hinged axles. The Technical Park and Bertazzon rides were sold by U.S. representative **Carlo Gugliemi** of **Ital International**.

All acquisitions this year are completely new. "We typically only buy new rides," Hartley told *Amusement Today*.

Improvements continue with the park reconditioning the log flume, called High Seas, by galvanizing the steel structure.

"The entire flume has been taken down. We've had the ride 18 or 19 years. It's a fan favorite," said Hartley. "We've updated the boats over the past couple of years, but it was starting to look a little worn. It was galvanized before, so there was never an issue with rust, but the galvanize was starting to wear and we were starting to see the waterline. We just wanted to get it out there looking newer and better."

Playland's Castaway Cove was founded in 1959. The anniversary season begins April 13.

—Tim Baldwin



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Great weather contributes to successful run for Florida State Fair

AT: B. Derek Shaw
bdshaw@amusementtoday.com

TAMPA, Fla. – The sun shone brightly on the **Florida State Fair** this year resulting in 483,591 total attendees over the 12-day event. This is a 14.1 percent increase over 2018. “We had a great year of weather with only one day of cool temperatures and rain. With increased attendance and revenue we will call the 2019 Florida State Fair a success!” exclaimed **Cheryl Flood**, Executive Director of the **Florida State Fair Authority**. Usually the fair lasts 11 days; however it was extended to include Monday, February 18 this year (President’s Day.) Discover the Fun was the theme.

There was a total of 96 rides. **Wade Shows** brought in 61 rides followed by **Dreamland Amusements** 13, **Suzy Shorb’s Wonderland Amusements** (Land of Fun), six; **Powers Great American Midways**, five; **Michael Wood**, four; **Fair Ride Entertainment (Myers)**, four; **Jimmy Danton**, two; and **Jeremy Floyd’s Top Scan**, two. New rides included **Downdraft**, (**Battech/Dartron**) **Haunted Castle** (**Gosetto**), **Tea Cups** (**Kolmax**), bumper boats along with a completely refurbished **Chance Rides Space Shuttle** brought in by **Wonderland Amusements**. Each year, there are 10-12 refurbished rides on the midway. This was the fifth time Wade has had the contract along with coordinating the other operators. The show first appeared there in 1992 when the Florida State Fair operated as an independent midway.

The top three grossing rides included the mammoth **Midway Sky Eye** (**Lamberink**, **Wade Shows/Michael Wood**), **Midway Sky Tram** (**Wade Shows**) and **Florida State Fair Electric Slide** (**Florida State Fair**). Total ride midway revenue was up grossing over \$5.2 million.

“They [Florida State Fair] certainly took most of the sting out of the bad weather at the

The expansive midway featured 96 rides. Even though there were 14 rides less than in 2018, total gross midway revenue was up over 5.2 million. COURTESY STEFAN HINZ



New to the Florida State Fair this year was a two-story **Gosetto Haunted Castle** (left). This is one of the four rides that **Bobby Myers Fair Ride Entertainment** had at that spot. **Suzy Shorb’s** newly refurbished **Chance Space Shuttle** (middle) was brought in through her **Wonderland Amusements** operation. The massive **Lamberink Sky Eye** at night (right). It is one of the largest travelling wheels in North America at 155 feet. COURTESY STEFAN HINZ

South Florida Fair,” said **Frank Zaitshik**, owner of **Wade Shows**. That event endured several days of continuous rain and the second Sunday the fair did not even open. Zaitshik felt Tampa was successful because “It was a combination of great management and staff, building a quality product the last three years. We have unique, high-capacity rides. Having the Sky Eye there is a major coup for the Florida State Fair.”

Even with the ride count 14 less than the previous year, the revenue “exceeded our wildest expectation at that location,” said Zaitshik. This was accomplished with more high capacity rides, efficient operations and

maximum ride cycle times. “Fair management understands the need to maximum revenue.”

A new promotion was offered to spur mid-week business. This was done with a \$2.00 Tuesday. That included \$2.00 admission and select food, ride and games after 2:00 p.m. Floyd commented, “This promotion was a huge success as we had over 24,000 take advantage of this promotion.” There were three other weekday promotions held on specific days: **Heroes Day** (military and first responders), \$5.00 admission after 5:00 p.m. and **Fair Cares** for the **Hungry** offered on the final day of the fair.

Flood discussed the enter-

tainment aspect of the 2019 fair. “We were very diverse and fruitful with our entertainment this year. We wanted to make sure there was something for everyone to see at the Florida State Fair no matter the age. In fact, many fair goers made note that there was too much to see for one day, mentioning they would have to make an additional trip to see it all. We made unique use of our Equestrian Center integrating “thrill shows and events” with our fair’s equine related events. This proved to be a big win and allowed the crowd to see all we have to offer at the fair.”

The Florida State Fair is the first state in the country

each year, helping to set the tone in the industry for the year. “Vendors and ride owners left happy and excited for the year ahead,” said Flood. There was also a change in demographics of their fairgoers. “Our midway could regularly be seen full of families with children enjoying all of the sights, smells and sounds the fair has to offer. This was on purpose, as our marketing plan targeted this audience. Our hope is that the community can see that the fair is meant for making family memories, and it’s a great place to do so!” said Flood.

The 2020 Florida State Fair takes place February 6-17.

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Puerto Vallarta welcomes Grupo Garcia Carnival



The Grupo Garcia Carnival was set up in Puerto Vallarta, Mexico, with a 25-day run that ended on Feb. 24. Seen at the carnival's historic carousel (l to r) are Grupo Manager Roberto Gonzalez, Knoebels Amusement Resort's Dick Knoebel and Jeannie Reedy, and AT Publisher Gary Slade. Below, AT caught some of the action along the the 21-ride midway aboard the carnival's Giant Wheel from Chance. AT/GARY SLADE



New to the Puerto Vallarta location this year was Toro; a Larson Super Loop (above left), and the four-lane Super Slide (above right). The Fabbri drop tower and Pinfari Mark 1 coaster continue to be popular with guests. AT/GARY SLADE



MIDWAYSCENE

AT: B. Derek Shaw

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The **Maryland State Fair & Agricultural Society** announced the addition of **David Gordon** as assistant to the general manager. Gordon will work with General Manager **Andy Cashman** and team to preserve and grow the Maryland State Fair's reputation as a top showcase of agriculture, education and entertainment.

Gordon has participated in the fair since his youth. For the past 13 years, he has served as assistant superintendent for the 4-H Beef Cattle Division and superintendent of the 4-H Livestock Judging Contest. A former **University of Maryland** extension educator, Gordon helped manage a county 4-H program with more than 900 youth, training its volunteers with a focus on animal science. "I look forward to becoming part of the Maryland State Fair's already dynamic staff and am excited to help continue its legacy while striving for improvements," said Gordon. **Deggeller Attractions** handles the Aug. 22 – Sept. 2. fair's ride midway.

Matt Hussmann has been named the manager of the annual **Arlington County Fair** (Virginia) by its board of directors. Hussmann is currently with **EventPro D.C.** and formerly the executive director of the **Clarendon Alliance**. He will work in partnership with the fair board and its various committees, focusing on all aspects of management including sponsorships, marketing, entertainment, competitive exhibits, volunteer recruitment and logistics.

"Matt has a wealth of experience in building and strengthening events – we're delighted that he'll be bringing his talents to the Arlington County Fair," said Fair Board chair **Kyle Thornhill**.

The fair attracts nearly 80,000 people each year to the **Thomas Jefferson Community Center**. The 2019 fair will be held Aug. 14-18 with **Cole Shows Amusement Company, Inc.** providing the rides.

A recent meeting of the **United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)** held a panel discussion on the recognition of European fairground culture as an intangible cultural heritage. The **European Showmen's Union (ESU)** participated with speakers from France, Belgium, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Germany. They discussed the inclusion of fairgrounds in the respective national lists of intangible cultural heritage. At the end of the session, held in Essen, Germany, the ESU was charged with

assembling a working group of experts to coordinate an application to UNESCO for recognition of European fairground culture. The international ESU meeting took place during the general meeting of the **German Showmen's Association (DSB)** and **Interschau**, the largest trade show for traveling showmen in Europe. Ten European nations are part of the effort.

The **Eastern States Exposition (The Big E)** announced numerous personnel changes. **Robert Kelley** is now director of operations for the organization. Over the past 25 years, Kelley has served ESE as its contractor coordinator, overseeing numerous capital improvement projects. As director, Kelley will oversee operations including maintenance, construction, landscaping and contractors and continue to supervise all building projects on the grounds.

Cliff Hedges has been named the new director of public safety. He has an extensive, background in federal and local law enforcement, having retired from the **FBI** in 2012 after 26 years as special agent and a supervisory special agent. Early in his career, Hedges served as a patrolman and detective with the Dallas, Texas, Police Department.

Robert Gottsche, Jr., was promoted to sales manager. Gottsche will be responsible for all Big E vendors and concessionaires, and will oversee ESE's year-round event coordinators. He first joined the staff in 1983, becoming an event coordinator in 1991. In 1999, he began overseeing Young Building exhibitors, quickly adding vendor space sales and contracting to his responsibilities.

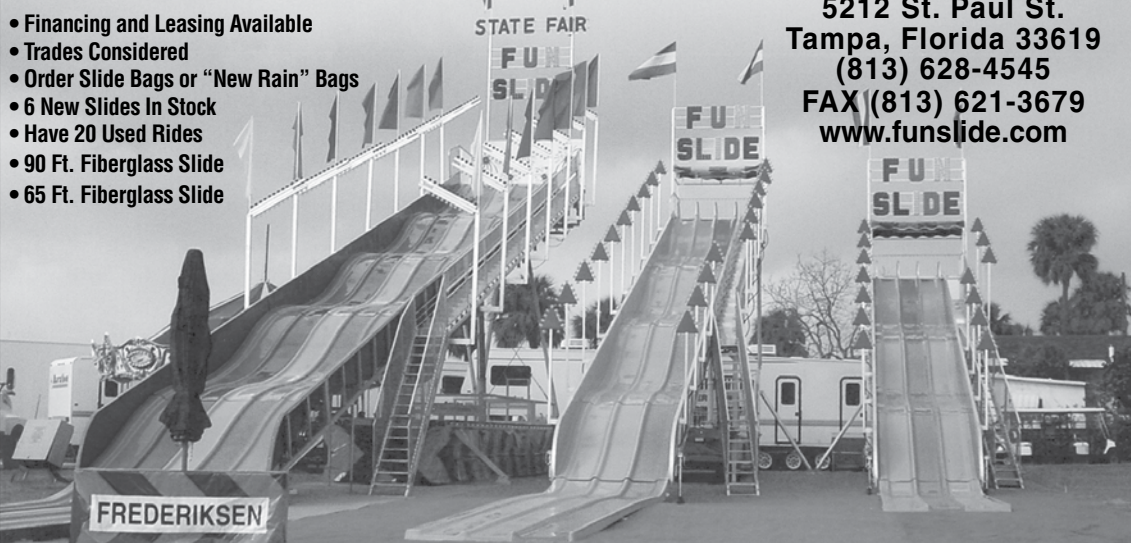
Steve Ferraro was named captain of parking and security. He will oversee all parking for weekend events and The Big E. Ferraro started working at ESE at age 14 when his father and long-time Big E employee, the late **Albert Ferraro**, oversaw the Exposition's parking.

Finally, **Terri Brown**, is now the creative arts/ New England center program manager. She has been affiliated with ESE since 2011 as the building's 4-H coordinator and later creative arts coordinator. In 2018, Brown became co-coordinator of the department. In her new position, Brown will oversee the management and administration of all contests, 4-H participation, displays and the New England Center stage.

The Big E takes place Sept 13-29 in West Springfield, Mass. with **NAME** operating the ride midway.

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WATER PARKS & RECREATION

► Aquatica San Antonio opens drop slide — page 24 / World's Largest Swimming Lesson — page 26

Parrotheads making waves at Margaritaville Resort Orlando

AT: Jeffrey Seifert
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KISSIMMEE, Fla. — The recently opened **Margaritaville Resort Orlando** just south of **Disney's Animal Kingdom Lodge** is expected to open its adjoining tropical-themed water park this spring. The \$800 million resort occupies land that once held the Splendid China exhibition park.

The laid back, Jimmy Buffet-themed full-service resort has been in soft-opening mode and began booking guests last year. It officially opened its doors on January 23 with a celebration that included dancers and steel drum music.

Non-stop entertainment, dining, shopping, spas, a soft-sand beach, lagoon pools, kids' club, teen center and the soon-to-open water park will have guests "wasting away" their day and leaving all their worries behind.

Guests entering the hotel lobby are welcomed with whimsical island architecture including a 13-foot flip-flop sculpture and a lighting fixture made from more than 300 inverted margarita glasses. Upon check-in they will soon have a glass in hand as welcome cocktails are presented to those staying on property.

The 300-acre resort consists of four sections: The 184-room Margaritaville Hotel; 300 Margaritaville Cottages—which are available to rent or own as a timeshare; Sunset Walk shopping, dining and entertainment district; and **Island H2O Live! Waterpark**. Many of the cottages have already been leased and are occupied while others are in various stages of construction. Future plans call for more than 700 additional cottages in a variety of configurations ranging from one to eight bedrooms. Guests and residents at the cottages, which surround a central lagoon, can connect to the resort amenities via a system of water taxis.

The estimated \$40 million, 14-acre water park will include nine different thrill rides from three ride towers — including a Master-Blaster uphill water coaster, a wave pool, family raft ride, waterplay structure, activity pools, plenty of hammocks, cabanas and an adult-only area. To further cater to guests, the water park will



When completed, the Margaritaville Resort Orlando will have more than 700 cottages, hotel, water park and a shopping, dining and entertainment district, all connected via water taxis. This overhead rendering (right) shows all of the attractions that will be available to guests at the Island H2O Live! Waterpark. COURTESY MARGARITAVILLE RESORT ORLANDO; ADG

have DJs, dance parties and an outdoor event space.

Aquatic Development Group (ADG) was contracted to design and build the water park, with **WhiteWater West** supplying the slides. The 24,000-square-foot dual-beach wave pool will utilize ADG's **Wavetek** technology to simulate the ocean, and a 1,300-foot-long lazy river, with a 500 square foot beach-style entry, will wind its way through the water park. Other pools include a formal pool for adults, an activity pool with water basketball, and a crossing lagoon that will challenge guests to bounce, swing and stay balanced on floating obstacles in order get to the other side. Another pool with shallow water and small slides is designed for children.

The water park will take advantage of WhiteWater West's new **Vantage** system that includes an RFD wristband that synchronizes with a pre-loaded smartphone app. It will enable guests to choose their own music and lighting experience on certain waterslides. Guests can synchronize a credit card to that same wristband and use it all day at various food outlets and shops throughout the park. The park can even notify guests, via the Vantage system, of certain sales or specials — such as a freshly frozen margaritas — or entertainment happenings throughout the day. Locker

rentals are tied to the wristband as well. With the guests' phone, wallet and other personal items safely secure in a locker, they can use the RFD band to activate cameras throughout the park to take pictures and video so users can still share selfies with social media sites of their choice. Those with aspirations to become a singer may want to try another high-tech feature, "Be Live" which invites guests to sing karaoke and star in their own audio/visual experiences. Thanks to the Vantage system, clips from those experiences can also be shared on social media.

Margaritaville has yet to release any names of the slide attractions, but products include a new offering from WhiteWater called a Blasterango that combines a Master-Blaster uphill waterslide with a Boomerango. A Constrictor+Rattler fusion slide and a Super Bowl 30 with a sawtooth top round out the one- or two-person raft slides. A second, larger Boomerango and a huge family raft slide both accommodate six-person rafts. Two drop capsule slides, including one with a near vertical drop and the second featuring a flatline loop will both begin with AquaDrop capsules. A six-lane mat racer slide finishes up the grown-up attractions.

The kids have a separate pool with mini body slides, a ramp slide and a 3-lane kids slide. The whole family can



spend time together dousing each other on an AquaPlay RainFortress 5 with multiple interactive features, and the quintessential tipping bucket.

The water park will be the first in the area to have an adults-only zone (Disney's Typhoon Lagoon had a temporary adults-only area during the holidays). It will feature a 2,500-square-foot wade-in pool flanked by a large deck space, a lounge area and bar and grill, serving of course, a variety of margaritas and other favorites.

Unlike other resort properties, Island H2O Live!, as well as the Sunset Walk, are available to everyone — not just those staying at the resort. There will even be an annual pass option for local Florida residents or those who visit the area frequently.

Adjacent to the water park and accessible via a short walk or trolley ride, is Sunset Walk which, in addition to a variety of shops, has entertainment venues including a Studio Movie Grill, with in-theater

dining and a full bar; GameTime, offering a huge selection of video arcade games, simulators, prize machines and more than 60 TVs for prime viewing of sporting events.

Dining options will offer more than just a cheeseburger in paradise with name brand restaurants such as BurgerFi, Coldstone Creamery, Bahama Bucks, Café D'Avignon, Bento's Asian Kitchen & Sushi, Ford's Garage, Capone's Coal Fired Pizza, Yeoman's Cask & Lion, and Rock & Brews. The latter, operated by Kiss bandmates Gene Simmons and Paul Stanley, features a craft brewery and will host live concerts.

Margaritaville Orlando resort was developed by **Encore Capital**. **Horizon Waterpark** will own the water park and is working with Encore on the attraction. The Margaritaville Resort will be the 13th of its kind, with 11 other resorts around the U.S. and one in the Cayman Islands. Seven more are currently planned.

ProSlide Technologies tapped to deliver thrills

The largest drop slide in Texas opens at Aquatica San Antonio

AT: Tim Baldwin

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SAN ANTONIO, Texas — Right on the heels of Taumata Racer installed in 2018, **Aquatica, SeaWorld San Antonio's** water park, has introduced Ihu's Breakaway Falls. Debuting March 9 in time for the city's spring break, the attraction not only boasts being the first new waterslide to open in an outdoor water park for 2019 but has the claim of being the tallest drop slide in the state.

Supplied by **ProSlide Technologies**, the eight-story tower features two drop capsules and a plummet slide.

The drop capsule concept has proven popular not only throughout the state, but also the country as one of the most sought-after attractions in the past decade. This style of attraction has been introduced at other SeaWorld Entertainment properties in past years.

"One of the first ones in our system was when I was at **Water Country** in Virginia," said **Carl Lum**, park president. "I saw how popular it was. When we were thinking about attractions for San Antonio, that came right to mind. To me, it has a really nice thrill. When you ride it for the first time, the suspense of waiting for the floor to drop out and listening to the [audio] heartbeat ... it's really cool."

Once riders are inside the capsule, a clear door is closed. On Ihu's Breakaway Falls, riders face each other, not knowing which will drop first. Thrill rides of this type involve a trap door floor that delivers a pulse-pounding adrenaline rush, primarily driven by the anticipation of the unknown.

"The operator can play with them a little bit to see who drops first," said, **Jeff Janovich**,



Ihu's Breakaway Falls features three slides from an 80-foot tower. COURTESY SEAWORLD

VP of business development, ProSlide. "Seeing their friends drop a split second before them can add to the anticipation."

Bragging rights to the tallest slide of its kind in Texas is an easy marketing pitch.

"We did our research," said Lum. "We worked with ProSlide to make sure that was accurate."

"The drop capsule slide over the last few years has really revitalized the speed slide," said Janovich. "In the early years of the water park industry, speed slides were one of the few slides that existed, so everyone had them. For a while everyone was looking at new innovations. When the drop capsules came out, parks started looking at speed slides as an option because of the new feature on the start."

The eight-story tower also features a third slide that doesn't feature a drop capsule.

"When you ride the plummet slide, from a slide experi-

ence might be the most thrilling of the three," said Lum. "We call it the 'chicken-out' slide. It's the one people take when they don't want to go through the drop box. It's got some steepness and some nice twists and turns. When testing with our ambassadors, we got some really good comments with the speed and turns."

"With a straight freefall, you're traveling in a straight line. But with the transition from vertical to curve, we put longer radiuses to make smooth transitions so that it is comfortable for the rider," said Janovich. "The G forces are what makes those high-speed slides fun, but you want to make sure the forces build up gradually."

The attraction is named after Ihu, Aquatica's colorful gecko.

"One of the things that makes Aquatica special is that it has that great level of theming within the park," said Lum. "If

you compare Aquatica to a lot of our competitors, the theming is really immersive. When we redid the water park several years ago, we had the signage updated that really looks sharp and crisp. It's nice to have that overall theme that is consistent."

Despite temperatures having a bit of chill in the air, Aquatica opened the new attraction for spring break.

Even with cooler temperatures, **Chuck Cureau**, director of public relations, told *Amusement Today* people were still drawn to the new attraction. "There was something enough to it that they were attracted to it and wanted to do it," he reported.

"Our [media day] had twice the pace of our previous installation in terms of interest," said Lum.

To build two towering attractions in back-to-back years could be termed ambitious for a water park.

"We want something new at the park every year," said Cureau. "We want to keep that momentum going. It really keeps the interest in this beautiful water park. It combines thrilling rides, serene beaches and don't forget about the animal component. I think that's what really differentiates Aquatica from our competitors."

"We're fortunate to be working with SeaWorld on three attractions this year," said Janovich. "This was the first to open. We're excited to have that ongoing success."

Along with diversifying the attraction lineup, Ihu's Breakaway Falls also makes a visual statement.

"We picked the site with a particular purpose in mind," said Lum. "When you walk through the entrance gate, you see it right up front. Its location is where Aquatica meets SeaWorld. You are literally looking right at the tower."



The new slide tower emphasizes visibility as its placement is front and center as guests enter the SeaWorld/Aquatica front entrance (left). When guests step inside the drop capsule (right), they face the opposing rider. COURTESY SEAWORLD

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World's Largest Swimming Lesson helps spread awareness

OVERLAND PARK, Kan. — On Thursday, June 20, 2019, the World's Largest Swimming Lesson (WLSL) will usher in the start of summer. Now in its 10th year, WLSL was created as a platform to help the aquatics industry build awareness about the fundamental importance of teaching children to swim to help prevent drowning. It is estimated that more than half of all Americans don't have basic swimming skills.

Amusement Today is proud to be a media sponsor of the event to help spread the word that a significant number of drowning deaths can be prevented. *AT* encourages aquatic facilities and trainers in the local community to help parents connect the dots between learning to swim and staying safer in and around the water.

The Tenth Annual World's Largest Swimming Lesson will take place at more than 600 facilities in 20 different countries.

The purpose of the events is



More than 600 facilities in 20 different countries will participate in the Tenth Annual World's Largest Swimming Lesson. COURTESY WORLD WATERPARK ASSOCIATION

to provide kids and parents exposure to life-saving water safety skills and educate parents about the vital importance of vigilance and teaching children to swim to help prevent drowning.

Each year, WLSL events provide more than 20,000 man hours of water safety training in a single day. Since its inception, more than 278,000 children and adults in close to 50 countries have participated in WLSL lessons.

Per the World Health Orga-

nization, drowning is the third leading cause of unintentional injury-related death, accounting for seven percent of all injury-related deaths. In the U.S., drowning remains the leading cause of injury related death for children ages one to four, and the second leading cause for children under 14.

In 2014, a survey completed by the American Red Cross found that more than half of all Americans (54 percent) either can't swim or don't have all of



the basic swimming skills.

According to Safe Kids Worldwide 2016 report, despite the fact that lack of supervision played a role in the majority of drowning deaths, less than half of parents (49 percent) indicate they remain within arms' reach of their child in the water.

Research shows participation in formal swimming lessons can reduce the risk of drowning by 88 percent among young children yet many kids

do not receive formal swimming or water safety training.

Nearly 80 percent of people who die from drowning are male.

Since the WLSL event launched in 2010, the Swimming Lessons Save Lives message has been shared with more than a billion people.

Register at WLSL.org. Learn more about this phenomenal program by visiting a local host facility or www.WLSL.org

—Jeffrey Seifert



Registration to become a World's Largest Swimming Lesson Host Location is now open. Being a WLSL Host Location on Thursday, June 20, 2019 makes a difference in the lives of your guests by reminding them of the importance of learning to swim. Be part of this global team that has spread the message, *Swimming Lessons Save Lives™*, to a BILLION kids and adults since 2010. Visit WLSL.org to register.

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Charges dismissed in Schlitterbahn case

KANSAS CITY, Kan. — Wyandotte County Judge Robert Burns dismissed five indictments against three individuals, Henry & Sons Construction Company and KC Waterpark Management LLC. The criminal indictments were handed down in May 2018 by a Wyandotte County grand jury following the tragic death of a 10-year-old boy on one of the park's attractions in Aug. 2016. In Oct. 2018, two Schlitterbahn employees were found not guilty of charges of obstruction of justice.

The indictments were problematic from the start, garnering national attention particularly within the amusement industry. Accidental-death cases are usually settled in a civil court. It is extremely rare for park owners, companies or designers to be held criminally liable, particularly with second-degree murder charges. The potential repercussions of a criminal conviction sent a wave of apprehension throughout the industry. At the time of the indictments, Schlitterbahn had already settled a wrongful death case with the family for nearly \$20 million.

Legal experts noted that prosecutors from the Kansas Attorney General's office took over the case from the Wyandotte County District Attorney, and then used a grand jury to obtain the indictments. In Kansas, grand juries are rarely used; typically a judge decides whether the state has enough evidence to show probable cause. Questions were raised as to if the charges were politically motivated. The victim was the son of a Kansas state representative.

Wyandotte County taxpayers have had to reimburse the Kansas Attorney General's office more than \$125,000 in expenses since the case was taken over. The result has been two defendants being acquitted at trial and now five dismissed indictments.

Prosecutors from the attorney general's office reportedly abused the grand jury process by presenting evidence that would not have been admissible in a trial, including clips of reality television which was scripted and fictionalized for entertainment purposes. Other evidence, such as a list of purported OSHA violations and ASTM standards not in effect at the time of construction, improperly influenced the jury.

Jeff Morris, an attorney representing Henry & Sons Construction, stated, "We have consistently said that the fact that it's a tragedy doesn't mean it's a crime, and I think we pretty persuasively indicated that the manner in which the state tried to establish a criminal offense was not done the right way and the court agreed."

—Jeffrey Seifert

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Wavegarden recently signed a contract to build the world's largest surfing lagoon in South Korea. Scheduled to open in 2020, the man-made surf park is located in Turtle Island, Siheung, an hour's drive from Seoul, on land that was reclaimed from the ocean. Turtle Island is a new international waterfront destination, which will have different water and landside leisure facilities including hotels, convention centers and marinas. The centerpiece of the \$2.3 billion avant-garde mixed-use development will be the Wavegarden Cove surfing lagoon. The Cove, is capable of producing up to 1,000 ocean-like waves per hour, which unfurl across a range of different surfing areas. Each area offers waves of different size and power specifically designed to provide ideal conditions for everyone, from professional surfers to newcomers picking up a surfboard for the first time. Apart from riding waves, Turtle Island will offer various other aquatic activities like kayaking, stand-up paddleboarding and swimming in zones with and without waves. An innovative water treatment system, developed specifically for wave lagoons, will keep the water transparent and clean throughout the year.

Funfields Themepark, Victoria, Australia, recently opened Volcano Bay, a heated wave pool featuring the latest Wave technology from **ProSlide**. The new design produces well-defined waves in variable wave patterns that are free from turbulence. The park can cycle through eight different wave patterns. The area also includes the Beach Shack food outlet and six VIP huts.

Since partnering with ProSlide in 2013, and adding three high-profile slides, Funfields has nearly doubled its attendance.



NEWS SPLASH

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Santa's Village Amusement Park, East Dundee, Ill., will open a water attraction this summer in honor of its 60th anniversary. The new attraction, Santa Springs, will feature a two-story water play structure with dozens of interactive features, six water slides, and two tipping buckets.

This is the first water feature for the park and it will include a 2,000-square-foot bath house for guests to change. The area also includes lounge chairs and private cabanas to allow parents a little relaxation time while the kids enjoy the water play structure.

Park President **Jason Serpien** said, "We knew we wanted to add a water feature for those days when it's really hot out. Guests had been asking for it. So we've been working on it for a really long time."

Royal Caribbean's Navigator of the Seas recently completed a \$120-million, seven-week Royal Amplified upgrade that included the addition of a Perfect Storm Waterpark. The modernization, which was performed at Freeport, Bahamas, was delayed a few days due to poor weather conditions forcing the cruise line to cancel its first cruise. The ship re-entered service on March 1 cruising the Southern Caribbean.

WhiteWater West supplied the attractions for the new water park which included a Master Blaster and Aqua Tube mat racer slide. At 800 feet

in length, the slide, aptly called "Blaster," is now the world's longest at sea. Parts of the slide extend over the edge of the ship and riders can see the ocean far below as they transverse transparent sections of the slide. Not to be outdone, the mat racer, Riptide, also extends over the edge of the ship with a transparent section as well.

The refurbishment also includes a reimagined pool area, creating one of the largest pools at sea with plenty of deck space for lounge chairs and even a splash pad for the kids. The ship also includes a FlowRider that had been installed during a 2014 refurbishment.

A 3.5-million-gallon natural freshwater pool has been restored in **Balmorea State Park**, Texas. The iconic San Solomon Springs pool reopened to the public on March 1, following several months of restoration work. The pool was closed last May after damage to the concrete apron under the diving board was discovered during the pool's annual cleaning. The pool is the main feature of the park and is fed by a freshwater spring with a constant flow of 22 to 28 million gallons of water per day, so no chlorination is needed. The pool was constructed by the Civilian Conservation Corps between 1936 and 1941. Due to the cultural sensitivity of the site and the presence of endangered species in the nearby ciénega, no heavy equipment was used during construction.

"We are thrilled to have the pool at Balmorea open once again. The pool is a natural wonder that is enjoyed by visitors far and wide," said **Rodney Franklin**, director of Texas State Parks. "This renowned desert oasis is not only important for our West Texas community but for all of Texas."

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BUSINESS & NEWSMAKERS

► **Women of Influence: Karen Oertley — page 33 / Scandia Fun Center closes — page 35**

Chocolate Town remains the home for PAPA spring meeting

AT: B. Derek Shaw
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HERSHEY, Pa. — Nearly 90 members and guests of the **Pennsylvania Amusement Parks & Attractions (PAPA)** organization held their annual two-day spring meeting at **Hershey Lodge and Convention Center** in late February. Attendees were from member parks, attractions, manufacturers and related industries.

New member organizations this year include **Attractions Marketing, Basic Fun!, Baynum Painting, Major Mega, LLC, MoJo Active, Performance Optimist Consulting** and **Tritech**.

Day one started with a PAPA Board of Directors meeting. Presentations were made by **Walt Remmert**, Bureau of Ride & Measurement Standards Director, **Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, Melissa Bova**, vice president of government affairs, **Pennsylvania Restaurant Association (PRLA)** and **Erika Scheffer**, director of state advocacy for **IAAPA**. A reception and banquet took place that evening. The invocation before the meal was provided by **Buddy**

Knoebel, Knoebels Amusement Resort and a past PAPA president. The evening proceedings were led by **Leanna Muscato**, third generation owner, **Knoebels Amusement Resort** and 2017-18 PAPA president.

The organization again held a 50/50 raffle for their **Barbara J. Knoebel** scholarship fund with \$560 raised in total. **Tom Rebbie, Philadelphia Toboggan Coasters Inc.** won the raffle. He donated his half back to the fund. Each year seven \$1,000 scholarships are awarded to students who work at any of the participating member parks/attractions. Upon conclusion of dinner, many attendees retired to The Forebay Lounge to continue imbibing and networking into the night.

The second day included the annual breakfast membership meeting with association business highlighted. Areas reported on included: legislative and PRLA progress, Amusement Ride Safety Advisory Board, student scholarships and PAPA new website reports. The last item of business included the installation of the 2019-20 slate of officers. **Brian Gorman, Waldameer**



Park & Water World was elected president, **Mike Fehnel, Dorney Park & Wildwater Kingdom** is first vice president, and **Dick Knoebel, Knoebels Amusement Resort**, secretary/treasurer. The position of second vice president is currently open and will be filled by the summer meeting in mid-July.

Looking back, outgoing President **Muscato** reflected on her two-year term. "It was probably the fastest two years of my life. Everybody in this industry works together. Everybody is willing to give their time. Everybody is willing to answer your questions."

Muscato highlighted two accomplishments she is most proud of during her presidency. "I was the one that initiated the name change, to include more of our members in the name itself." (From **Pennsylvania Amusement Park Association** to **Pennsylvania Amusement**

Parks & Attractions, still retaining the same acronym.) "We can now go out and get more members in that respect."

The other accomplishment during her tenure concerned the organizations' migration to a new website. "I'm really excited with what we have done with the website. It's very interactive. It's going to be outstanding."

Incoming President **Brian Gorman**, who is VP of operations at **Waldameer Park** shared his thoughts: "I love the organization and the relationships that are able to be made. That's the one thing I value the most." When asked what his plans might include **Gorman** said, "Trying to continue that relationship that we have with everyone we have in the organization and continue to push our goals of safe, clean fun." The minimum wage issue is one of the critical areas he plans to keep an eye on.

Gorman is the third family member to serve as president of PAPA. **Paul Nelson** was president in 1964, followed by son-in-law **Steve Gorman** in 2003-04.

Upon conclusion of the PAPA spring meeting, more than 45 attendees participated in the always-popular round-

table discussions in the training room of the Service Center at **Hersheypark**. This is the eighth year the session has been held, coordinated by **Gary Chubb**, senior director of maintenance at the park. There were more than 30 topics the group discussed into mid-afternoon. They included metal detectors, drone policies, unhappy guests and compensation policies, employee recognition, incentives and retention, early and late season staffing, school starts, retrieval of lost items and more.

This was the 84th spring meeting of the **Pennsylvania Amusement Parks & Attractions**. The organization was formed in 1935 with **R.L. Plarr** from **Dorney Park** serving as the first president. In 1946, roller coaster designer **Herbert P. Schmeck** from **Philadelphia Toboggan Company** was president. The 2019 summer meeting will be held at **Kennywood Park**, **West Mifflin, Pa.** July 15 and 16. The **PACE (Parks and Carnival Education)** ride safety seminar is scheduled for October 28 – 31 in the **Altoona, Pa.** area with a "hands-on day" at **DelGrosso's Park & Laguna Splash Water Park**, **Tipton, Pa.** on October 29.

SeaWorld breaks ground on new Orlando headquarters



ORLANDO, Fla. — **SeaWorld Parks & Entertainment** broke ground on its new headquarters this past December. The 40,725 square foot, three-story building will be a shared home for ambassadors from the current **Park Support Center** as well as at the **SeaWorld Orlando park**. In attendance at the groundbreaking were **Orange County Mayor Jerry Demings** and **Visit Orlando's George Aquel**. The audience also included the **Millennia Gardens Elementary School Eco Club**, a local group of students who — inspired by the **SeaWorld Orlando Rescue Team** — grow lettuce that feeds rescued and rehabilitating manatees. The new building is projected to open in **Fall 2019**. COURTESY SEAWORLD PARKS AND ENTERTAINMENT

NJAA's gift show attendance on par

AT: Pam Sherborne
psherborne@amusementtoday.com

ATLANTIC CITY, N.J. — More than 500 people attended the 24th annual **East Coast Gift and Variety Show** sponsored by the **New Jersey Amusement Association (NJAA)** and held Feb. 20 and 21 at the **Golden Nugget Grand Ballroom**.

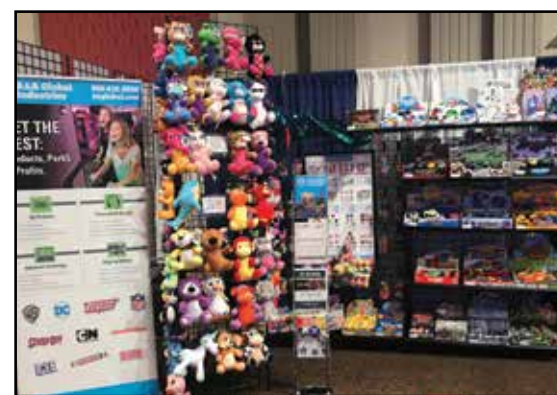
This trade show was established to provide close-to-home buying and business opportunities. It includes suppliers of amusement plush, novelties, licensed toys, rides and games. There also are service companies that provide amusement insurance, staffing help, ticketing and uniforms.

Kimberle Samarelli, executive director, NJAA, said the 500 attendance number was on par with last year's show.

"Everyone was very upbeat and looking for a strong summer as long as weather is on our side," **Samarelli** said.

Fortunately, weather was on their side for the gathering, which included meetings, discussions and party get-togethers. It also offered participation in **National Association Of Amusement Ride Safety Officials (NAARSO)** testing. Right on par with the 2018 event, 130 people participated in the **NAARSO** portion this year.

"Highlights from the show include some new vendors, old vendors and forming friendships," **Samarelli** said. "Attendance was very strong from in-state as well as out-of-state."



A variety of amusement plush, novelties, licensed toys, rides and games at the **East Coast Gift and Variety Show**. COURTESY NJAA

The exhibit hall was open both Wednesday and Thursday and went well.

Other highlights included the **Scholarship Cocktail Party** that was held on Wednesday, Feb. 20.

In addition, professional discussions were held over the course of the two days. Those included an update from the **Department of Community Affairs Annual Ride Regulations**; the **Legalized Game of Chance Control Commission Certification** and policy update and a round table discussion on the topic of minimum wage. The **NJAA Board of Directors** meeting also was held during the two days.

Dates for 2020 are Feb. 18-20.

• njamusements.com

MARKET WATCH

COMPANY	SYMBOL	MARKET	PRICE 03/11/19	HIGH 52-Week	LOW 52-Week
The Blackstone Group	BX	NYSE	33.49	40.60	26.88
Merlin Entertainments Group / Legoland	MERL	LSE	363.00	415.70	304.50
Cedar Fair, L.P.	FUN	NYSE	52.62	67.85	45.73
Comcast Corp./NBCUniversal Media	CMCSA	NASDAQ	39.17	39.97	30.43
The Walt Disney Company	DIS	NYSE	114.75	120.20	97.68
Dubai Parks & Resorts	DXBE:UH	DFM	0.25	0.56	0.23
EPR Properties	EPR	NYSE	75.11	76.15	52.80
Fuji Kyoko Co., Ltd.	9010	TYO	4230.00	4285.00	2582.00
Haichang Holdings Ltd.	HK:2255	SEHK	1.68	2.30	1.18
Leofoo Development Co.	TW:2705	TSEC	6.18	7.75	5.45
MGM Resorts International	MGM	NYSE	26.57	36.81	21.61
Parques Reunidos Servicios Centrales S.A.	ES:PQR	MCE	9.99	15.18	9.84
Royal Caribbean Cruises, Ltd.	RCL	NYSE	116.88	133.60	89.48
Sansei Technologies, Inc.	JP:6357	TYO	1537.00	2160.00	1117.00
SeaWorld Entertainment, Inc.	SEAS	NYSE	26.55	32.47	13.87
Six Flags Entertainment Co.	SIX	NYSE	50.00	73.38	49.14
Tivoli A/S	DK:TIV	CSE	678.00	704.00	590.00
Village Roadshow	AU:VRL	ASX	3.32	3.5	1.73

STOCK PRICES ABOVE ARE GENERALLY QUOTED IN THE FOREIGN CURRENCY IN WHICH THE COMPANY IS LOCATED

Worldwide Markets: **ASX**, Australian Securities Exchange; **CSE**, Copenhagen Stock Exchange; **LSE**, London Stock Exchange; **NYSE**, New York Stock Exchange; **NASDAQ**, National Association of Securities Dealers Automated Quotations; **SEHK**, Hong Kong Stock Exchange; **SZSE**, Shenzhen Stock Exchange; **TSEC**, Taiwan Stock Exchange, Corp.; **TYO/TSE**, Tokyo Stock Exchange

—SOURCES: Bloomberg.com; Wall Street Journal

BUSINESS WATCH

Cedar Fair declares 1st-quarter distribution

SANDUSKY, Ohio — At the end of February, **Cedar Fair Entertainment Co.** (NYSE: FUN) announced the declaration of a regular quarterly cash distribution of \$0.925 per limited partner (LP) unit. The quarterly distribution rate is consistent with the company's annualized distribution rate of \$3.70 per LP unit announced last October. The distribution, which was payable on March 20 to unitholders of record as of March 11, represents the company's 33rd consecutive year of paying a cash distribution to its unitholders. Cedar Fair recently reported record results for 2018 and announced a new long-term adjusted EBITDA growth target of \$575 million by 2023, which represents a four percent compound annual growth rate over the next five years.

New Jersey advances min. wage legislation

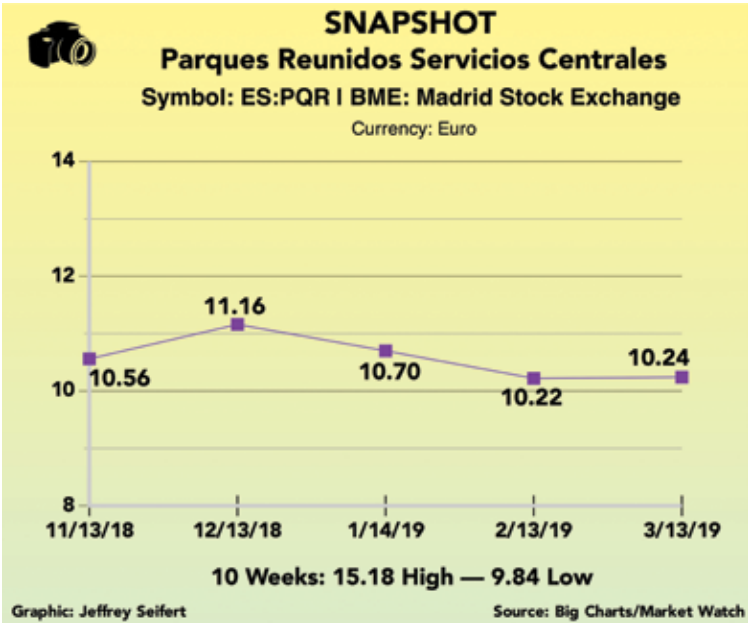
TRENTON, N.J. — Gov. **Phil Murphy**, Senate President **Steve Sweeney** and Assembly Speaker **Craig Coughlin** have reached an agreement on legislation to raise New Jersey's minimum wage to \$15 / hour for more than one million workers — a move designed to promote broad-based economic growth. Under the legislation, the base minimum wage for New Jersey workers would increase to \$10 / hour on July 1, 2019. By January 1, 2020, the statewide minimum wage would increase to \$11 / hour, and then would increase by \$1 / hour every January until it reaches \$15 / hour on Jan. 1, 2024. For seasonal workers and employees at small businesses of five workers or less, the base minimum wage would reach \$15 / hour by Jan 1, 2026.

Six Flags sees ninth year of record revenue

GRAND PRAIRIE, Texas — **Six Flags Entertainment Corp.** (NYSE: SIX) reported that 2018 was its ninth consecutive record year as revenue increased \$105 million, or eight percent, to \$1.5 billion. The revenue growth was driven primarily by a five percent increase in attendance; a two-percent increase in guest spending per capita, driven by a four-percent admissions per capita increase; and a seven percent increase in sponsorship, international agreements and accommodations revenue. Attendance grew to 32 million guests, driven primarily by the company's acquisition of five domestic parks in June 2018; the benefit of 365-day operations at **Six Flags Magic Mountain** in Valencia, Calif.; and strong growth in Mexico and at the company's water parks. Net income for the year increased \$2 million, or one percent. In other company news, plans for **Six Flags Dubai** reportedly have been suspended pending the outcome of a strategic review by UAE-based developer **DXB Entertainments PJSC**.

SeaWorld announces results for fiscal 2018

ORLANDO — **SeaWorld Entertainment, Inc.** (NYSE: SEAS), has reported its financial results for the fourth quarter and fiscal year 2018. Fourth-quarter attendance increased by 0.3 million guests, or eight percent, to 4.6 million guests from the same period in 2017. Total revenue increased by \$14.5 million, or 5.5 percent, to \$280 million from the fourth quarter of 2017, while adjusted EBITDA for the quarter was \$64.6 million — an improvement of \$16.2 million, or 33.4 percent, over the fourth quarter of 2017. Attendance during fiscal 2018 increased by 1.8 million guests, or 8.6 percent, to 22.6 million guests from 2017. Total revenue increased by \$109.0 million, or 8.6 percent, to \$1.37 billion, while net income was \$44.8 million compared to a net loss of \$202.4 million in 2017. Adjusted EBITDA for the fiscal year was \$401.3 million, an improvement of \$103.9 million, or 35 percent, over 2017.



DIESEL PRICES

Region (U.S)	As of 03/11/19	Change from 1 year ago
East Coast	\$3.123	\$0.099
Midwest	\$3.011	\$0.112
Gulf Coast	\$2.881	\$0.099
Mountain	\$2.939	\$0.036
West Coast	\$3.162	\$0.110
California	\$3.778	\$0.126

CURRENCY

On 03/14/19 \$1 USD =	
\$0.8847	EURO
\$0.7590	GBP (British Pound)
\$111.27	JPY (Japanese Yen)
\$1.0057	CHF (Swiss Franc)
\$1.4141	AUD (Australian Dollar)
\$1.3337	CAD (Canadian Dollar)



OBITUARIES

Ron W. Miller, former Walt Disney Co. CEO

NAPA, Calif. — Ron W. Miller, a former CEO of Burbank-based Walt Disney Prods. (now the Walt Disney Co.), passed away Feb. 9. He was 85.

In 1954, Miller, then a University of Southern California football star, married Walt Disney's 20-year-old daughter, Diane. He served in the U.S. Army and briefly played for the Los Angeles Rams before Walt offered him a job at his studio in 1957. Miller became president of the company in the late 1970s and CEO in 1983. A year later, he was forced out in a power struggle that left Frank Wells and Michael Eisner at the helm.

Miller was a key force behind, among other endeavors, Epcot Center in Orlando, Tokyo Disneyland and Touchstone Pictures. After he left the company, the Millers moved to the Napa Valley, where they operated Silverado Vineyards.

Miller is survived by seven children and 17 grandchildren and great-grandchildren. His wife, Diane, died in 2013.

Lula Vourderis, Deno's Wonder Wheel Park

QUEENS, N.Y. — Lula Theodora Vourderis, matriarch of Coney Island's Deno's Wonder Wheel Amusement Park, died Feb. 18. She was 87.

Vourderis is credited with helping to make Coney Island a destination.

While selling hot dogs from her family's pushcart in Manhattan after World War II, she met her future husband, Denos Vourderis. The pair spent weekends in Coney Island, where Denos proposed to Lula in 1947 — promising her that he would buy her the Wonder Wheel Ferris wheel one day.

Some three decades later, with the couple having produced four children and run successful food operations in Coney Island, the promise was fulfilled. They restored the landmark ride and added attractions around it.

Vourderis retired in 1995. Her sons, Dennis and Steve, continue to operate the park.



Miller



Vourderis

WhiteWater West Industries, Ltd., has tapped **Philip Edgell** to serve as president of **Vantage**, the Vancouver-based waterslide manufacturer's newly launched guest engagement platform designed to elevate venue operations and visitor experiences. Edgell most recently led sales operations at **Hootsuite** as global vice president. Prior to joining Hootsuite, he was executive vice president of operations at **Long View Systems**, an information technology services and solutions company, where he was organizationally responsible for business performance in North America and Europe.



Edgell

Betson Enterprises has hired **Paul Novick** as vice president of sales and sales operations. Previously, Novick spent five years leading sales and sales management training for **Kärcher North America**, where he developed account management and customer service training programs. His track record of success spans a variety of industries and includes senior management positions with top companies such as **Cendant**, **Realogy**, **AIG** and **Marriott**. In his new role at Betson, Novick will oversee critical planning and sales performance for the Carlstadt, N.J.-based amusement and vending equipment supplier.



Novick

Ride Entertainment has promoted **Eli Parawan** to managing director, parks and attractions. Parawan joined Ride Entertainment in 2015 and has managed all marketing and sales for the parks and attractions division for the last three years. In his new role, he is responsible for overseeing all seven locations within the division while also helping to identify possible future sites for company growth. With offices in the Baltimore area and New York City, Ride Entertainment employs more than 150 people and has projects worldwide.



Parawan

Josh Powers has joined the Orlando-based **International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions (IAAPA)** as executive vice president and chief financial officer. Powers will serve as IAAPA's strategic advisor on all financial issues impacting IAAPA's global mission and service offerings, including financial analysis, investments, asset and cash management, and financial functions that support the association's growth and sustainability. In addition, he will lead the finance and information technology teams. Powers spent 10 years serving in financial positions with **SeaWorld Parks & Entertainment**, most recently as corporate vice president, financial planning and analysis. He also spent 12 years in various roles with **Busch Gardens Williamsburg** in Virginia.



Powers

A.Cüneyt Sayın has been named general manager of **Futuraform Composites and Advertising Products, Inc.**, a Turkish company that provides engineering, project management and design services for theme parks and other clients. **Sayın** began his professional career at **Bayraktarlar / STEA Farba** in 1993 in the role of production engineer and continued at **Pressan** in 1995-96 as an industrial design and product development specialist. He spent 11 years in the production, export, and research / development departments at **Beldayama** before becoming senior manager in the park and landscaping sectors in 2009.



Sayın

St. Louis-based **InterCard** has underscored its commitment to customer service with the addition of **Isabelle Sherrillo** to its growing team as customer service advocate. Sherrillo will provide concierge service, overseeing customer service requests to ensure they are handled in a timely fashion and to the customer's satisfaction. She will also help customers prepare for their InterCard debit card technology installations and provide follow-up support. A native of Brazil, Sherrillo speaks English, Portuguese and Spanish and holds a master's degrees in information technology and marketing. Prior



Sherrillo

ON THE MOVE

to InterCard, she was a mortgage department relationship manager for **U.S. Bank** in St. Louis and worked on the customer operations team at **Mastercard** in O'Fallon, Mo.

Jeff Siebert, president of **Six Flags Fiesta Texas** in San Antonio since 2016, has additionally been named president of **Six Flags Hurricane Harbor Splashtown** (formerly **Wet 'n' Wild Splashtown**) in Spring, Texas, near Houston. **Six Flags Entertainment Corp.** is undertaking a multimillion-dollar renovation of the attraction, which opened in 1984 on a site previously occupied by **Hanna-Barbera Land** and will officially reopen under the Six Flags banner this May. The project marks the return of the company to the Houston market, where it owned the same water park from 1990 to 2007 and also owned **AstroWorld** until its closure in 2005.



Siebert

Triotech has appointed **Karen Staley** as regional vice president of sales, U.S.A. region. In her new role, Staley will lead the North American business development efforts of the Montreal-based immersive attractions company. Staley, an industry veteran, has extensive experience in the global entertainment and attractions industries — including more than 17 years in senior management and business development roles with IAAPA and its European-based regional association that includes the Middle East and Africa, **IAAPA EMEA**.



Staley

Waterplay of Kelowna, British Columbia, Canada, a global supplier of aquatic play equipment, has strengthened its sales team and expanded in China with the appointment of **Constance Sun** as business development manager. Based in Shanghai, Sun will serve as the first point of contact for Waterplay's dealer sales channel in China and handle all direct sales projects. Additionally, she will identify and nurture business growth opportunities by forging partnerships with key stakeholders.



Sun

Michael Turner is the new vice president of global business development for attractions design and production company **The Producers Group (TPG)**. Turner has developed extensive knowledge of the international market in his 34-plus years in the industry. He will be responsible for global strategic planning and business development and the continued growth of TPG's global offices in Shanghai, Dubai and Orlando. Turner currently serves IAAPA as chairman of the Membership Committee and co-chair of the Global Education Member Services Committee. He lives in Central Florida with his wife, **Franceen Gonzales**, executive vice president, business development, for **Whitewater West Industries, Ltd.** ("Women of Influence," *Amusement Today*, October 2018).



Turner

In other personnel news from TPG, **Jennifer Miller** has been named vice president of content development out of the company's Los Angeles-area headquarters. Miller has more than 25 years of experience in the entertainment industry as a producer, project manager and production stage manager of live shows, events and location-based entertainment. Her production and management contributions have encompassed high-profile projects worldwide. In her new role, Miller will lead a development team of 40 across four offices.



Miller

Wild Adventures Theme Park in Valdosta, Ga., has promoted **Jon Vigue** to the position of assistant general manager. A 20-year industry veteran, Vigue, who joined the **Herschend Family Entertainment** property in 2016, previously served as the park's director of revenue, security and safety. Prior to that, Vigue was assistant general manager at **Lake Compounce** Amusement Park in Bristol, Conn., where he held leadership roles in brand-enhancement projects, holiday events and expansions.



Vigue

Women INFLUENCE

A view from the top...

Karen Oertley has served as executive director for AIMS International for the last five years. She plans to retire at the end of May. She has worked in the live entertainment industry since 1978 beginning with the publication **Amusement Business** (AB).

Accomplishments and affiliations...

- **Amusement Business/Liseberg Applause Award, Chairman, Board of Governors, 1990-2004**
- **AIMS International, Board of Directors, 1996-2004**
- **International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions (IAAPA): Manufacturers & Suppliers (M&S) Committee, 2002-2004; Small Parks Committee, 1999-2000 and Exhibit Awards Committee, 1993-1995**

Another chapter begins

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — Karen Oertley will retire at the end of next month as executive director of **AIMS International**.

"It wasn't an easy decision for me, but I feel it was a good one," Oertley said.

She doesn't know what her life's next chapter will look like, but there is little doubt it will include the live entertainment industry in some fashion.

"I know I will never completely step away from the live entertainment industry," Oertley said, sitting in a restaurant in Nashville, Tenn.

She has called Nashville her home since she and her husband, **Chuck Oertley**, packed up their car with little more than her paintings and pottery in 1974 after graduating from **Knox College**, in Galesburg, Ill., and headed south.

It was a move that would later set a defining career course for Oertley in the live entertainment industry, an industry she was very close to growing up.

"I grew up on the upper east side of Manhattan," she said. "Both of my parents were tennis officials and were very involved in the **Forest Hills Stadium** there."

The prestigious Forest Hills Stadium was home to the **US Open Tennis Championship** until 1978 and hosted a variety of other noted tennis matches throughout the years.

"Among other duties, my parents were both umpires," Oertley said. "During high school and college, I worked for a woman who ran the Easter Bowl, a prestigious Junior tennis tournament. She owned a business that offered all-day children's programs for convention groups including the Bar Association and the AMA, so I found myself going out to restaurants

and other venues in and around Manhattan negotiating deals for events and tours for the programs."

There were many events at the stadium and Oertley met some of the most noted tennis players of the time. In addition, she spent a lot of time at Coney Island as well as other local amusement parks.

After meeting her husband at college, she found out that his father was on the fair board at the Heart of Illinois Fair in Peoria.

It does seem the industry danced around her from a very early age.

In her first years in Nashville, she worked several jobs before finally landing the one that put her inside the live entertainment industry in a way in which she had never experienced.

That job was promotions manager with **AB**, a trade publication owned by **Billboard Publications** at that time. It covered all types of live entertainment including theme, amusement and water parks, fairs and carnivals, arenas and stadiums, concerts, convention centers and food and beverage. The year was 1978.

Her first IAAPA trade show was later in the same year.

"They made me sit out in the hallway and sell subscriptions," she said.

She loved the industry and she loved **AB**.

"I think the thing I enjoyed more than anything was the camaraderie of the **AB** staff," she said. "We really had a good time together."

She also found that rare opportunity to advance at **AB**. She grabbed it. She moved up the ranks beginning with promotions manager, then on to marketing manager, director of marketing, general manager, publisher and, finally, publisher and editor in chief. She also became a VP of the **Bill-**

Karen Oertley

Executive Director
AIMS International
Nashville, Tenn.



board Music Group and held responsibility for **Musician Magazine** and the company's Nashville office operations.

As a woman, she never felt intimidated in her positions at **AB**. In fact, she had told herself many years before that she wasn't ever going to let that issue define her.

For the first years of Oertley's tenure at **AB**, the publication thrived. Ownership changes, corporate climates and technological advances all created challenges.

"There were a lot of things happening at once," she said. "Many things, I couldn't even tell the staff. But, what I can say, it was a perfect storm."

That storm raged on and resulted in the demise of **AB** in 2006. The Nashville office had closed two years prior to that so, in 2004, Oertley found herself either without a job or having to commute to New York City to become publisher of one of **AB's** sister magazines, **Hospitality Design**. She did the latter, but decided to return to Nashville after a couple of years.

In the years following, she filled in several lines on her resume. These included: the executive director of the non-profit **Leadership Music** in Nashville, self-employment offering marketing and communications consulting and director of marketing for **O.D. Hopkins**, which was later acquired by **WhiteWater West Industries**.

In 2014, she became the executive director of **AIMS**.

As Oertley faces her next chapter, she realizes just what the industry has given to her.

"Not only have I gained the gift of lifelong friendships and experiences, I've gained a true appreciation for what it takes at every level to be part of this amazing business. Being part of the amusement industry in any capacity makes us all ambassadors of the business."

She hopes she has been able to share an awareness of the business with others. She hopes she has helped others create their own paths.

"It has been a pleasure," she said.
—Pam Sherborne

The Void, a leading producer of virtual reality (VR) technology and content based in Lindon, Utah, introduced its groundbreaking entertainment to Asia last December with the opening of a location-based hyper-reality experience center at **Resorts World Genting** in Malaysia. The attraction, located within the sprawling, multi-hotel resort's **Skytropolis Funland** indoor theme park, features two popular film-based experiences from **ILMxLAB**, a division of **Disney-owned Lucasfilm, Ltd.**: *Star Wars: Secrets of the Empire* and *Ralph Breaks VR*.

"Our partnership with Resorts World Genting is a proud moment for our team," said **Craig Watson**, chairman and CEO of The Void. "Opening our very first center in Asia in such an iconic location is a great start to our journey in the region."

Following the closure of several of its **IMAX VR Experience Centre** locations in the U.S. and overseas last summer, **Imax Corp.** announced that the rest would be shuttered in the first quarter of this year (facilities in Los Angeles, Toronto and Bangkok were the last in operation). After just two years, the company reportedly is discontinuing its foray into location-based applications of the technology.

Imax's dissatisfaction with what it now describes as a VR "pilot program" surfaced during a company earnings call early last year. "The consumer reaction was extremely positive, but the numbers just weren't there," said CEO **Richard Gelfond**, indicating that only one of the company's seven centers was performing as profitably as hoped at that point.

VRgineers, headquartered in Prague, recently introduced a headset described as the first with fully integrated hand tracking as well as voice command and superior high-resolution image quality. Called XTAL, the equipment offers improved visual accuracy that makes reading text and observing finer details in VR easier. The company has released several upgrades to the headset, including two on the software side, that further advance its inside-out tracking and eye-tracking capabilities without the need for external tracking hardware.

A new headset called Quest, produced by **Oculus**, sports an inside-out tracking feature called Insight that enables arena-scale experiences — allowing users to move freely through large spaces. It incorporates four wide-angle cameras that track the environment around the user and the location of the headset within the space. Additionally, the company's existing room-scale Guardian system, which protects users from bumping into their surroundings, has been upgraded to handle multiple-room applications.

The **National Geographic Society** (NatGeo) has introduced the first VR theater experience in Washington, D.C., with the help of Burbank, Calif.-based **Spaces, Inc.** The Grosvenor Auditorium at the **National Geographic Museum** is now equipped with technology that takes full advantage of NatGeo's 360-degree photography and visual storytelling, immersing audiences attending the museum's live talks and events in the world's most remarkable places.

Spaces outfitted the auditorium with 450 Oculus Go headsets, a dedicated server, proprietary coding and applications, and a remote triggering system that allows for a shared VR experience. It debuted with verbally guided visual tours of the spectacular buttes and cliffs of **Bears Ears National Monument** in southeastern Utah and the frozen landscape of Antarctica.

In other Spaces news, the company has partnered with international motion picture exhibitor **Cinemark** to bring the former's *Terminator Salvation: Fight for the Future* VR experience to Cinemark's **Century 20**



VR ROUNDUP

AT: Dean Lamanna

dlamanna@amusementtoday.com

Oakridge and XD theater in San Jose, Calif. The Bay Area attraction, which debuted in early February, blends 4D effects, 3D face scanning, physical interaction, wind, movement and social group play (for up to four players at a time) in a mixed-reality adventure.

"We provide consumers a shared VR adventure where they can suit up and escape with their friends and family again and again," said **Shiraz Akmal**, CEO of Spaces. "We've found that a lot of people are trying VR for the first time when they visit a Spaces center. It's a very comfortable, family-friendly space... and affordable to enter, play and see what VR is all about."

Akmal added that Spaces offers the first location-based entertainment that allows guests to take a piece of the experience home with them through a highlight video they can share on social media.

Five for Co., Ltd., of Japan officially launched its **VR Ninja Dojo** experience in Tokyo in February after previewing it at **IAAPA Attractions Expo** in Orlando last fall. Combining a cultural experience with a ninja adventure, the attraction is set in a hidden village where visitors dressed in costume engage in a VR fight to earn their "ninja cred."

The hour-long experience involves training in swordplay and martial arts techniques before the VR battle portion, which utilizes Five for Co.'s proprietary MR-Box mixed-reality technology. The digital world is populated with enemies based on traditional Japanese monsters and zombies. Participants are presented with a commemorative photo, a video link to the experience and a ninja certification.

Lititz, Pa.-based **MajorMega** has unveiled **Hyperdeck**, a small-footprint VR game system supporting up to four players and featuring wind simulation, variable motion, vibration and heat effects. Included in the product's launch is *H.A.I.R.*, a 10-minute, 1980s heavy metal rock-themed experience. The company will offer new game content for the platform about every six months.

Enjoying worldwide growth in the location-based VR market, **Hologate** of Munich recently introduced an extensive lineup of hardware upgrades and new game titles. Among the latter developed in-house are *Zombyte*, a sci-fi zombie shooter, and *Groove Guardians*, a rhythm game featuring music tracks and energetic full-body gameplay.

Hologate also has been busy on the third-party content front. The company has joined forces with **Sony Pictures VR** and **Rovio Entertainment Corp.** to bring *The Angry Birds Movie 2* into the location-based VR realm this summer. The German World War II submarine thriller *Das Boot*, a hit 1981 film based on the anti-war novel of the same name, is set to become a VR game experience, while a collaboration with online multiplayer game producer **Wargaming** will give rise to a *World of Tanks VR* game scenario.

Mooresville, Ind.-based **Creative Works** has been Hologate's exclusive distributor in North America since 2017.

Los Angeles startup **Dreamscape Immersive**, an operator of primarily pop-up multiplayer VR sites, has plans for four permanent locations aside from the **Westfield Century City Mall** venue it maintains in its home city. The new stand-alone and theater locations are Dallas / Ft. Worth, metro areas in New York and New Jersey, and Columbus, Ohio.

"At its heart, Dreamscape is about merging the scope and emotional power of cinema with the pure visceral excitement of a great theme park ride — all within a totally new VR technology that allows our audience to enter into and become part of the story," said **Walter Parkes**, company co-chairman.

Dreamscape's flagship L.A. location offers several 25-minute experiences. Early heavy-hitting Hollywood investors included **AMC**, **Steven Spielberg**, **21st Century Fox**, **Warner Bros.** and **Imax Corp.**

Manchester, England-based **ImmotionVR** has opened an experience facility in London at **London Designer Outlet**, adjacent to **Wembley Stadium**. Technical highlights of the location include motion simulators and surround sound.

"We're excited to be in such a prestigious venue," said **Arek Antoniak**, ImmotionVR's head of retail operations. "We're offering families a unique type of experience, with cutting-edge VR... the possibilities are literally endless."

Sandbox VR secured \$68 million in Series A funding in January. The financing round for the Hong Kong-originating VR destination company was spearheaded by Silicon Valley-based venture capital firm **Andreessen Horowitz** and includes participation by **Alibaba**, **Floodgate Ventures**, **Stanford University**, **Triplepoint Capital** and **CRCM**.

Sandbox has been developing its own games, including a futuristic shooter, a haunted house scenario and an underwater treasure-hunting adventure — all featuring reduced complexity for greater scalability. The 30-minute game sessions are designed for two to six players at \$40 per person.

Sandbox currently operates seven locations in North America and Asia. Earlier this year, additional sites were being planned in Chicago, Los Angeles, New York and Austin, Texas.

In March, **HTC Vive's Vive Arts** program and the **American Museum of Natural History** debuted a VR experience as part of the New York City institution's "T. rex: The Ultimate Predator" exhibit. The new attraction, called *T. rex: Skeleton Crew*, represents a collaboration of the museum's Science Visualization team, **Vive Studios** and Warsaw-based augmented reality (AR) / VR studio **Immersion**.

Designed for as many as three participants at a time, the experience places visitors in a virtual re-imagining of the museum's Hall of Saurischian Dinosaurs, where they work together to build a T. rex skeleton bone by bone. Completing the dinosaur skeleton transforms it into a walking, breathing beast while the hall itself transforms into T. rex's Montana home circa 66 million years ago. In addition to the multiplayer VR, the museum is displaying life-sized reconstructions of T. rex at various life stages.

Vive Arts has partnered with several museums worldwide on special digital and VR exhibit experiences, including the **Royal Academy of Arts** in London, **Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle** in Paris and **Newseum** in Washington, D.C.

Asia Amusement & Attractions Expo 2019 (AAA 2019), presented by **Guangzhou Grandeur Intl. Exhibition Group**, rolls out May 9-11 at the **China Import & Export Fair Complex** in Guangzhou, China — and co-located with it is the **VR & AR Fair & Summit**. This year, AAA 2019 will encompass 12 themed pavilions and cover 130,000 square meters. Participating game technology companies have included Hologate, **Bandai Namco Entertainment, Inc.**, laser tag systems manufacturer **Delta Strike Intl.** of New Zealand and VR / AR / interactive solutions specialists **Mind & Idea Fly Co., Ltd.**, of Taiwan. Visit aaaexpos.com for this year's exhibitor and attendee details.

One of two Scandia Fun Centers in Southern California closes

After the closing of Scandia's Ontario, Calif., family entertainment center, the landmark Scandia Screamer, a Miller steel coaster, was listed for sale by Rides 4U and an A.R.M. / Larson Intl. Super Shot drop tower was being relocated to Scandia's nearby Victorville facility. COURTESY SCANDIA RECREATION CENTERS



ONTARIO, Calif. — **Scandia Family Fun Center**, part of a three-property family entertainment center (FEC) chain in the Golden State, has been shuttered after almost 27 years of operation.

The 7.9-acre facility, just off Interstate 15 about 45 minutes east of downtown Los Angeles, has been sold to an undisclosed buyer. Plans for the site were unknown.

According to **Scott Larson**, president of **Scandia Recreation Centers**, the closure will not adversely impact the company's other locations in Victorville, nearly 40 miles to the north, and Sacramento.

As of the end of February, **Rides 4U** of Somerville, N.J., was listing 11 of the FEC's rides for sale — most notably the landmark Scandia Screamer, a 90-foot-tall, 2,600-foot-long **Miller** steel coaster, for \$950,000. Several rides, including a 140-foot-tall Super Shot drop tower co-produced by **A.R.M., Inc.**, and **Larson Intl., Inc.**, and a number of arcade games were to be re-

cated to the Victorville facility.

Larson said an increasing number of slip-and-fall lawsuits, and a purchase offer that was too good to refuse, led to the property's sale. "It's been fun making memories," he told the *Inland Valley Daily Bulletin*. "Really, what made the decision was lawsuit abuse — or fake lawsuits. It's quite a burden."

Scandia's Ontario location was a significant local employer and popular with church and school groups as well as company events. It featured about two dozen rides and attractions, including an arcade, miniature golf, a picnic area and a 200-seat pavilion.

In 2018, the company's Victorville location added a three-lane family slide that was once installed at **Neverland Ranch**, the former home of **Michael Jackson**, in Los Olivos, Calif.

—Dean Lamanna

Six Flags banner flying high over three new parks

GRAND PRAIRIE, Texas — **Six Flags Entertainment Corporation** (NYSE:SIX), the world's largest regional theme park company and largest operator of water parks in North America, announced that three of its newest facilities will be rebranded as Six Flags parks. **Darien Lake**, **Wet & Wild Splashtown** and **Wet & Wild Phoenix** were acquired from **EPR Properties** last year. The parks are currently undergoing major renovations and preparing to welcome guests for a thrilling 2019 season.

"We are proud to have these incredible parks bear the Six Flags name and we are making major investments in all three properties with record-breaking attractions and extensive upgrades including new theming, paint treatments and branded signage, along with updates to restaurant and retail locations," said Senior Vice President of U.S. Park Operations **Tom Iven**.

Darien Lake near Buffalo, NY, will become Six Flags Darien Lake. In 2019, the park will introduce Six Flags

SkyScreamer, the tallest attraction in the state of New York. This swing ride will serve as a new symbol for the region, towering 242-feet above the park as it spins 32 guests through the air at 35 mph.

Wet & Wild Splashtown, Houston's largest waterpark, will be rebranded Six Flags Hurricane Harbor Splashtown. This season, the park will debut Wahoo Wave — an innovative, six-story waterslide. This attraction sends four riders into near vertical motion as they experience extended hang times and zero g-forces. Riders plunge 30 feet straight down before sweeping across the top of a massive waterfall, then descend into a pool below. The water park will also debut a new Caribbean theme and major improvements throughout.

Wet & Wild Phoenix, the largest water park in Arizona, will be rebranded Six Flags Hurricane Harbor Phoenix. The park will debut a fresh, new look with extensive Caribbean theming in 2019 as well as an updated dining area, expanded seating and numerous other upgrades.





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Monster Mini Golf franchise creator builds success, gives back

AT: Dean Lamanna
dlamanna@amusementtoday.com

LAS VEGAS — Offering a more affordable alternative to the higher-end, craft cocktail-slurping family entertainment center chains springing up in North America over the last decade, **Monster Mini Golf** has emerged as a surprising success — bringing a traditional form of amusement indoors, adding popular music and fantastic fluorescent props, and setting it all aglow in retro blacklight.

The brand was created by **Christina Vitagliano** and is franchised through **Monster Entertainment, LLC**, which she owns with her husband, **Patrick Vitagliano**. The company, now in its 15th year, has overseen the opening of all-season miniature golf courses in more than 30 locations across the U.S. and Canada. The Vitaglianos personally own two specially licensed Strip-area venues in Las Vegas, where they are based: **Kiss by Monster Mini Golf** at the **Rio All-Suite Hotel & Casino** and **Twilight Zone by Monster Mini Golf** at **Bally's Las Vegas Hotel & Casino**.

Exuding the pride and confidence that come with profitable entrepreneurship and a reputation for community involvement, Christina also displayed earthy wit in announcing the company's latest project — a perpetual fundraising campaign labeled "Share a Pair to Support Public Education," launched last November.

"Monster Mini Golf has a lot of balls, and we're using them to help raise dollars for local schools within the communities where we are located," she said, explaining the company's decision to donate 100 percent of online and onsite sales of special-edition golf ball sets to randomly selected local public schools. "Currently, public school funding gets pushed to the bottom of the agendas, and it's affecting our teachers, students and the future of our country."

"We wanted to make a difference."

Putting for the gold

Greeting *Amusement Today* in the party room at the Bally's Las Vegas location — a theater lobby-like space filled with vintage 1950s sci-fi movie posters and other details inspired by the adjacent 18 *Twilight Zone*-themed tees — Christina described the obstacle-filled course that led her from a vague idea in 2003 to this lucrative and philanthropic place.



"It's a really messed-up story," she said with a laugh, recalling her dissatisfaction with an otherwise thriving antique auction house she had established in a leased, century-old mill in Danielson, Conn., after managing nightclubs in nearby Providence, R.I. "Pat and I traveled all over the world collecting antiques, and I loved the business because the research was amazing, but every day I saw greed. After about five years of it, I didn't want to do it anymore."

While figuring out what was next, Vitagliano kept hearing people around town, especially those with kids, complain about the cost of entertainment. "It stuck in my head," she said.

She sold the most valuable remaining part of her auction house, the mailing list, and the couple fell back on the income from Pat's concert rental company — the sound and lighting equipment for which occupied only a portion of the old mill's several thousand square feet.

Vitagliano filled her time writing a memoir, looking into self-publishing it when she felt it was almost finished. But she quickly learned that it would cost about \$5,000 just for the editing. "We didn't have the money, so I told my husband I was going to create a business to raise it." She determined that her new work would be "something fun for families and cost less than the movies." What it would be, she did not yet know.

It finally came to her on the return trip from a weekend in New York City.

"I turned to Pat and said, 'I know what I want to do.' He goes, 'Great. What?' I said, 'I want to do mini golf indoors.' He said, 'Why?' I said, 'Because we're in New England and I have to make money year-

round.'"

Near the end of the three-and-a-half-hour drive, Vitagliano had an epiphany that involved the old mill's vacant space, her husband's background in concert production and her own knowledge of the nightclub business — specifically, the latter's use of black paint on walls and ceilings, and even blacklight, to hide imperfections and create atmosphere.

"I turned to Pat again and said, 'What if we made it a blacklight mini golf?' He thought it was kind of cool."

With money extremely tight, Vitagliano leaned on some part-time income and her own determination — plus a lot of scavenging — as she spent the next several months assembling odd pieces and lumber for the miniature golf course. The condition of the old mill, she felt, lent itself well to a monster theme, and she went with it.

"I'm not artistic," she said. But she found ways to create some things as she imagined them, including a giant, sculpted tree that she made using 75 cans of spray insulation foam. "My first course was completely not legal. Back then, I had no idea."

En route to completion, Vitagliano decided the attraction would need arcade games but knew she could not buy them. Knowing something of how the vending business worked from her nightclub experience, she contacted several outfits to no avail before a company in Milford, Conn., expressed interest in supplying machines and pool tables. They agreed to a 50/50 profit split.

Another challenge was obtaining glow-in-the-dark golf equipment. While managing to find balls at **Walmart** and on **eBay** that glowed in blacklight, Vitagliano resorted to spray-painting a set of old miniature golf putters she bought online with fluorescent colors. "I totally winged it," she said.



Monster Mini Golf founder Christina Vitagliano (left) cozies up with Talky Tina, the evil doll from the classic TV series *The Twilight Zone*, at *Twilight Zone by Monster Mini Golf*, Bally's Las Vegas Hotel & Casino. AT/DEAN LAMANNA

With less than \$5,000 invested in the attraction, plus a tiny local print advertising budget, the first Monster Mini Golf opened on Memorial Day weekend of 2004. "The day before, everybody was laughing at me," she said. "My landlord was like, 'You'll probably get eight people.'"

Vitagliano proved the skeptics wrong as business grew steadily over the summer. On one rainy Sunday afternoon in mid-August alone, she counted about \$3,000 in the till. But then, she became concerned that some of the wealthy businesspersons among her customers might be thinking about swiping her concept. Discussing with Pat her intent to franchise Monster Mini Golf, she did some online research and found a company in Chicago to assist with the crucial financial and legal details and paperwork.

Pat sold his own small company to partner with his wife in taking this major step, and the couple roughed it for nearly a year — giving up their apartment, selling belongings and moving into the mini golf's office space in the old mill in order to pay off the business loan.

"It was horrible," said Vitagliano, describing how they slept on a mattress on the floor, built a makeshift shower in the restroom, and subsisted on ramen noodles and delivered pizza. "But when we became legal to sell franchises 10 months later, we sold our first one — and were able to finish paying off the loan — the first week."

Monstrously cool venues

A few years later, with about a dozen Monster Mini Golf franchises sold, the Vitaglianos had begun taking a harder look at Las Vegas. "We started coming here for all the trade shows," Christina said. "If you're an entrepreneur at heart, this is the most intrigu-

ing place for business. And it's the cool place for people who are weird."

They considered locations on the city's outskirts for another Monster Mini Golf of their own, but then decided those would be better for franchises. Vitagliano, eyeing a location across from the **Hard Rock Hotel**, knew they needed to come up with something special for a Monster Mini Golf closer to the Strip. And knowing her husband was a lifelong fan of the 1973-born rock group **Kiss**, she proposed that they create a Kiss-themed mini golf.

Through a business connection, she obtained a phone number for a lawyer representing the band. A year and a "bazillion dollars" later, they had a licensing agreement. Kiss by Monster Mini Golf opened in 2012.

"It was a huge risk, completely crazy," said Vitagliano, who wound up befriending and handling marketing projects for Kiss co-founder / frontman **Gene Simmons** — and even writing an authorized parody book about him.

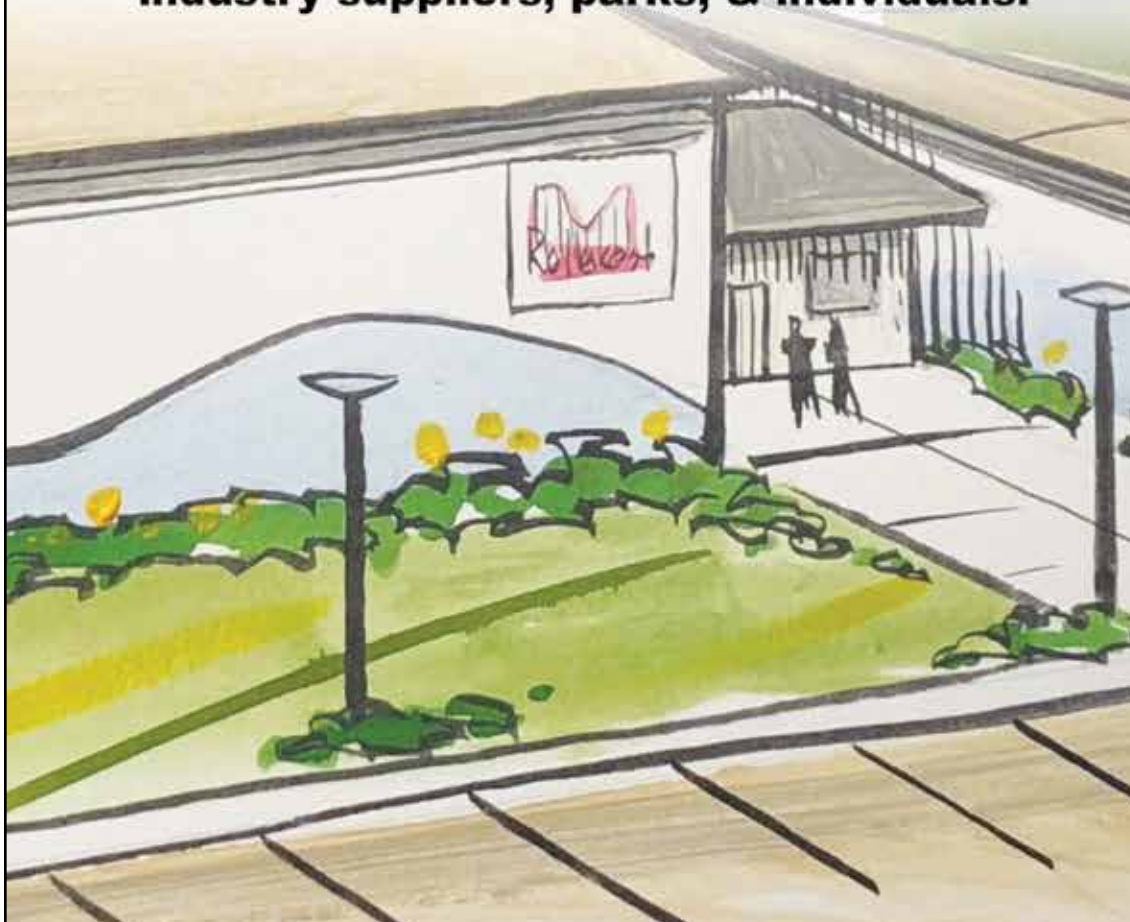
The risk paid additional dividends when casino resort operator **Caesars Entertainment** invited Monster Mini Golf to relocate the Kiss course to its Rio hotel property to the west of the Strip. Not long after that, Caesars offered a 10,000-square-foot space for another Monster Mini Golf venue — this one *Twilight Zone*-themed and licensed through **CBS Consumer Products** — at its Bally's property.

"Even when we first started, I knew I was taking something that's been around for a hundred years and giving it a 21st century twist," said Vitagliano, whose business philosophy is simple: all ages and abilities must be able to play. "A lot of activities today are not multigenerational, but miniature golf is."



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Scruffy Dog busy in 2019



LONDON — Shrek's Adventure! London, an interactive and immersive walkthrough attraction, has added Toothless' love interest, Light Fury, to its cast as part of their dragon utopia following the launch of the release of *How to Train Your Dragon: The Hidden World*. The production division of Scruffy Dog Ltd. teamed up with Merlin Entertainment to design, build and install this first look at Light Fury. The Scruffy Dog company has had a busy last few months. The company's London facility just completed an upgrade. And Scruffy Dog recently opened an office in Dubai to better represent customers in the Middle East. COURTESY SCRUFFY DOG LTD.

Reflections ON FUN



AT: Lottie Minick

Causing a 'flap'

I was standing in front of the games area I managed at the old **Seven Seas Marine Life Park** in Arlington, Texas, on a summer day in 1975. There were a few guests milling about, although no one seemed interested in playing my games.

Suddenly, the relative quiet was broken by a frantic voice: "Stop them!"

I looked up to see a pair of small black blurs careening down the hill. The blurs came into focus as penguins. They were flapping their useless wings and speeding along on tiny roller skates. Two bird trainers were in pursuit.

The penguins zipped past, their little eyes wide and beaks open. Their honking squeals of terror got everyone's attention. And their momentum was halted by a wooden fence at the bottom of the hill.

By the time the trainers caught up with them, the two stunned birds had picked themselves up and were looking curiously at the skates strapped to their feet. They honked again and took off rolling in another direction — this time under their own power, without the aid of gravity.

The park guests nearby trailed them, leaving me alone with the ring toss, tic-tac-toe and water balloon race.

There's no competing when penguins bring their own game.

Lottie Minick is a 45-year amusement industry veteran and co-owner of Dallas-based Minick Associates, a design firm founded by her late husband, Bob. This is the inaugural installment of her column, in which she will share humorous and unusual behind-the-scenes stories of her own and from those who have worked in the business.



SAFETY, MAINTENANCE & OPERATIONS

► WhiteWater refurbishes Shoot the Chute — page 40 / Cedar Point's Winter Chill Out supports charity — page 42

Kings Island builds new housing for out-of-area employees

AT: Tim Baldwin

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MASON, Ohio — Combating the ongoing need for attracting new staffing, **Kings Island** has taken the banshee by the horns and addressed it head on.

"Cincinnati is faced with a very tight labor market. Kings Island in the past has turned away guests who were interested in working here but lived far away. They needed a local housing option that was affordable," said **Chad Showalter**, director of communications. "Starting in 2019, we can provide housing for them. It's just \$65 a week."

Dubbed One Team Village, the new air-conditioned facility was named by the human resources department said Showalter. It will house up to 400 employees. The new One Team Village is on schedule to open mid-May, just as the park gears up for its summer daily season.



Opening in mid-May, One Team Village at Kings Island will house up to 400 employees for only \$65 per week. COURTESY KINGS ISLAND

"We like to think of it as a campus compared to a dormitory," Showalter told *Amusement Today*. "It is actually on property on our northern perimeter. Associates can walk to work."

Kings Island officials are excited to create a comfortable living space for the out-of-area staff. The complex will include a convenience store, an on-site laundry facility, community kitchen space, a basketball court and soccer field, mail

services, 24/7 on-site security and nearby grocery and dining options. One of the key features will be the recreation center.

"The rec center will be pretty big," said Showalter. "This is really their area to create community and have community space."

The center will also feature big screen satellite televisions in addition to the shared cooking space. Each unit will also feature its own mini-

fridge and microwave. Each room also comes with its own digital television hookup.

To be eligible, all staffing candidates must be at least 18 years of age. Typical rooms are to be approximately 10 feet by 17 feet. Two to four associates will be placed per room.

Additional benefits will include after-hours events, admission to not only **Cedar Fair** parks but also nearby parks such as **Kentucky Kingdom**, **Holiday World** and

Dollywood. Select employee trips including Niagara Falls and Washington DC are also planned.

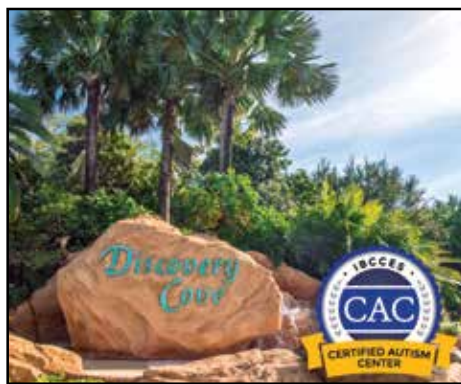
"Our human resources leadership is so connected with our associates and what is important to them," added Showalter. "Having that spirit of teamwork is one of the most important things to have. We're all aligned to give Kings Island guests the best experience they can have."

•visitingkingsisland.com

Discovery Cove first all-inclusive resort certified as Autism Center

ORLANDO, Fla. — **Discovery Cove**, in conjunction with the **International Board of Credentialing and Continuing Education Standards** (IBCCES), announced the completion of a staff-wide autism sensitivity and awareness training as well as an onsite review of the park property and guest experience. The completion designates Discovery Cove as a Certified Autism Center (CAC) as distinguished by IBCCES, making it the first all-inclusive day resort and animal interaction park in the U.S to be certified.

The certification follows sister parks **Sesame Place**, the first theme park in the world to reach this accreditation, and **Aquatica Orlando**, the first water park in the world to be accredited.



Discovery Cove in Orlando, Fla., became the first all-inclusive day resort to be certified as an Autism Center. COURTESY DISCOVERY COVE

Discovery Cove is SeaWorld Entertainment's day resort park,

where guests can enjoy a one-of-a-kind opportunity to swim with dolphins, snorkel among thousands of tropical fish and rays and other unique animal interactions, all in a tropical setting of rocky lagoons, lush landscaping and white, sandy beaches.

Working closely with IBCCES, the staff at Discovery Cove will be continually trained to assist guests with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and their families, to help ensure a positive experience during their visit. Guests will also be provided with specific information about each of the Discovery Cove experiences, along with in-park accommodations to help them plan their day and make informed choices best suited to their individual needs.

"Discovery Cove has long been recognized for its adventure-filled yet relaxed environment with a variety of open, clear spaces that make attractions and services more accessible and reduces sensory overload for guests with cognitive disorders," said **Kyle Miller**, President of Discovery Cove. "Autism certification is a natural step for us as we continue to create safe and meaningful experiences for all of our guests. We have seen how well received this certification has been at our Sesame Place and Aquatica Orlando parks, and we are committed in our efforts to offer families inclusive activities for children with autism and other special needs."

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Training, camaraderie highlight iROC camp at The Park at OWA

AT: Dean Lamanna
dlamanna@amusementtoday.com

FOLEY, Ala. — **Ride Camp 2019**, the annual **International Ride Operator Certification (iROC)** operator safety training program conducted by **International Ride Training (IRT)**, was held Feb. 5-8 at the **Foley Sports Complex** and **The Park at OWA**.

iROC is described as the only third-party certification of ride operations training and performance standards. Seeking to improve their training skills, dozens of students including directors, managers and supervisors from parks around the U.S. and beyond, attended educational sessions, received hands-on amusement ride instruction and conducted their own presentations — with their peers providing feedback.

This year's two locations "were wonderful hosts," said **Cindee Huddy**, IRT co-founder / owner and iROC class facilitator. "They embraced Ride Camp enthusiastically and made the school a smooth operation. The state-of-the-art sports facility space was great for classroom instruction and



Operations managers Karrah Folk of Cedar Point and Lori Cotton of Holiday World (left) instructed in ride operator professionalism and rider engagement at The Park at OWA during International Ride Training's Ride Camp 2019. Inside the Foley Sports Complex, students played a board game called iROCopoly (middle) to learn training techniques and formed working teams reflecting the event's camping theme (right). COURTESY INTERNATIONAL RIDE TRAINING

high-energy group activities, and the park team was accommodating, making each attendee feel welcomed."

The 2019 training worked with 13 industry leaders, or "camp counselors," from various parks who spent considerable time planning the event and preparing their student teams in advance. Each shared best practices and solutions for participants to use at their home parks.

Jeff Wilson, CEO of Athens, Texas-based adventure ride manufacturer **Extreme Engineering**, was the keynote speaker. Wilson

talked about his love for the industry and what it takes to succeed in it — imparting valuable real-life lessons about entrepreneurship, leadership and management.

The camp's returning director and leading counselor, **Dino Fazio**, director of operations and training for **Morey's Piers** in Wildwood, N.J., is instrumental in raising the bar for Ride Camp by organizing and leading the faculty members. Once again, Fazio gathered the best industry practices for presentation and emphasis to students.

Erik Beard, IRT manag-

ing member and legal counsel, shared industry insights through a summary of all parks that received iROC audits in 2018. The session detailed strengths, weaknesses and trends across the parks over the last two years. Beard also discussed the **American Disabilities Act** as it applies to ride operations.

Students were given an activity guide, created by long-term IRT faculty member and experiential learning expert **Lori Kaupp**, director of operations at **Elitch Gardens** in Denver, Colo., with more than 90 training techniques for

teaching critical safety procedures to operators.

Patty Beazley, IRT co-founder / owner and iROC class facilitator, described Ride Camp 2019 as "the best iROC school yet due to the quality of the educational classes and overall camaraderie."

iROC continuing education unit (CEU) certificates from **Tunxis Community College** of Farmington, Conn., which may be used in obtaining or maintaining other industry seminar certification, were issued to students attending the camp.

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Helping 'refloat' Shoot the Chute's boats

*WhiteWater handles
key refurbishment for
Noah's Ark attraction*

WISCONSIN DELLS, Wis. — Last year, Noah's Ark water park faced a dilemma with one of its biggest attractions, Flash Flood, a 50-foot-tall Shoot the Chute water ride installed in 1999 by O.D. Hopkins (a.k.a. Hopkins Rides).

In addition to fading paint, the ride's aging boats were showing signs of deterioration and damage. Two of them had been taken out of service.

The park turned to WhiteWater After Sales & Services, a division of Vancouver-based WhiteWater West Industries, Ltd., offering maintenance and related products. WhiteWater, which acquired assets and intellectual property from Hopkins Rides in 2012 and offers a modernized version of the attraction, was in the best position to understand and assist with the ride's technology.

WhiteWater's initial inspection found rust and corrosion on the vehicles' metal surfaces, including the lap bars. The company, working within safety guidelines and mandates, proposed a refurbishment plan designed to increase the boats' life expectancy with the minimum possible investment.

The boats were stripped down to their nuts and bolts and parts were replaced or repaired as needed. The process involved nondestructive testing (NDT) of the vehi-



The boats on Flash Flood, a 50-foot-tall O.D. Hopkins Shoot the Chute at Noah's Ark water park in Wisconsin Dells, recently were refurbished by WhiteWater After Sales & Services. Shown in closeup (right) is one of the newly rehabilitated and repainted vehicles. COURTESY WHITEWATER WEST INDUSTRIES, LTD.



cles' steel frames to evaluate the structural components. Money- and time-saving troubleshooting methods commonly deployed in NDT include visual, radiographic, ultrasonic, magnetic-particle and liquid-penetrant testing.

Once reassembled and reinforced, Flash Flood's vehicles were finished with a fresh coat of waterproof paint. The result: boats that look as good as new, rebuilt to last with reduced ongoing maintenance.

Scott Heke, president of WhiteWater After Sales & Services, described the refurbishment as a "first-of-its-kind project" for the division and

"a highly detailed task which shows the value of renovating your existing assets. We would be happy to provide this service to other customers with Shoot the Chute rides."

From small replacement parts and maintenance products to complete rehabs, the WhiteWater After Sales & Services team is capable of addressing a wide range of specific water ride and park needs with competitive pricing. For more information, contact aftersales@whitewaterwest.com.

—Dean Lamanna

Revised standard for water quality in public pools and spas approved

ALEXANDRIA, Va. — The Association of Pool & Spa Professionals (APSP) announced the newly revised ANSI/APSP/ICC-11 2019 Standard for Water Quality in Public Pools and Spas and features significant changes that will impact pool and spa service professionals across the nation.

The new standard for water quality is the first comprehensive, data-driven and knowledge-based national standard for pool and spa water quality and chemistry. The standard is ideal for understanding the minimum guidelines surrounding water quality parameters in public swimming pools and spas to be used for bathing and operated by an owner, licensee, or concessionaire, regardless of whether a fee is charged for use.

ANSI/APSP/ICC-11 2019 differs from its 2009 predecessor by addressing advances in technology and implementing an improved understanding of water quality and chemistry.

"For a decade, pool and spa industry service professionals have been using Standard 11 to advance customer satisfaction through improved water quality," said APSP Recreational Water Quality Committee Chairman, Joe Laurino, Ph.D. "This revised standard addresses secondary disinfection systems, the impact of stabilized chlorine on disinfection, and other recent industry developments affecting bather safety. Our hope is that service professionals and policymakers alike continue to be advocates for better water quality and adopt these strategies, based on the latest technical information available, in their everyday applications."

•apsp.org

CALENDAR

2019

2019 International Roller Skating Industry Convention and Trade Show

April 28 - May 2
Tropicana Las Vegas
convention@rollerskating.com • (317) 347-2626 ext. 102

NEAAPA Spring Leadership Seminar

May 20 at Canobie Lake Park
May 21 at Location TBD
www.neaapa.com

IAAPA Expo Asia 2019

Conference: June 11-14
Trade Show: June 12-14
Shanghai New International Expo Centre
Shanghai, China
www.iaapa.org

PAPA Summer Meeting,

July 15 & 16 • Kennywood Park, West Mifflin, Pa.
www.paamusementparks.com

2019 Golden Ticket Awards

presented by *Amusement Today*
Sept. 6 & 7

Silverwood Theme Park, Hayden, Idaho
Event Hotel: Coeur D' Alene Golf & Spa Resort
Event details to be announced in May
www.GoldenTicketAwards.com

IAAPA Expo Europe 2019

Conference: Sept. 16-19 • Trade Show: Sept. 17-19
Paris Expo Porte de Versailles, Paris, France
www.iaapa.org

WWA Annual Symposium & Trade Show

Conference: Oct. 7-10 / Trade Show: Oct. 8-9
Disney's Coronado Springs Resort at
Walt Disney World Resort, Orlando, Fla.
www.waterparks.org

IAAPA Expo 2019

Conference: Nov. 18-22 • Trade Show: Sept. 19-22
Orange County Convention Center, Orlando, Fla.
www.iaapa.org

IAFE Annual Convention

Dec. 1-4
Henry B. Gonzalez Convention Center
San Antonio, Texas
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2020

AIMS International 2020 Safety Seminar

Jan. 12-17, 2020
Galveston, Texas • (714) 425-5747
www.aimsintl.org

IAAPA FEC Summit 2020

Jan. 26-29, 2020 • Stone Mountain, Georgia
Atlanta Evergreen Marriott
www.iaapa.org

NAARSO 2020 Safety Fourm

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Have a Calender event listing you want to share?
Email it to:

editorial@amusementtoday.com

LJM & Associates provide safety check

LJM & Associates recently completed the QSI Initial Inspection on rides at Castle Park in Riverside, Calif. including the park's historic Dentzel Carousel. Here, LJM's Lewis J. Merz is verifying that all repairs have been completed, along with operational and safety related inspection/testing. The inspection included, but was not limited to: the ride structure (inside/outside and top/bottom); the 52 animals and restraints; the two sleighs and restraints; fencing and gates; signage, controls and drive system for the historic circa 1905 ride. COURTESY LJM & ASSOCIATES



IRT recognizes Holiday World ride ops

SANTA CLAUS, Ind. — For the second year in a row, Holiday World's team of ride operators has received the International Ride Training's (IRT) top award in Ride Operations Excellence.

The award is the result of scores earned during an unannounced safety audit at Holiday World during the 2018 season.

"It [was] a privilege to witness these ride operators in action," said IRT's Erik Beard. "The focus on safety, both from these parks and their operators, is evident in their training and performance. To achieve this award takes full commitment, teamwork, and real dedication to guest safety."

Holiday World's crew of 175 ride operators received high scores in all categories during the unannounced third-party safety audit last season. According to IRT,

Holiday World is the only park to receive this award two years in a row.

"This award is a result of the remarkable dedication of our Attractions Team," stated

Holiday World's president, Matt Eckert. "Whether it's a children's canoe ride or a 17-story-tall roller coaster, our team members always keep safety as their top priority."



Holiday World — represented by (l to r) Adam Woodall, attractions manager; Lori Cotton, director of attractions; and Alan Saltzman, attractions manager — showcase the park's IRT award. COURTESY HOLIDAY WORLD & SPLASHIN' SAFARI

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39th consecutive Northwestern Showmen's Club Safety Seminar a success

AT: Pam Sherborne
psherborne@amusementtoday.com

PORTLAND, Ore. — The **Northwestern Showmen's Club (NWSC)** wrapped up another successful Safety Seminar Feb. 22, concluding it's 39th consecutive annual safety event.

There were 157 attending the seminar this year, which was held at **Oaks Amusement Park** and the **Funtastic Shows** campus, both in Portland, Ore.

Crystal Hoss, NWSC president, hosted the event.

"We had a very nice seminar this year," said **Beverly Burback**, Funtastic Shows and NWSC safety seminar committee chairman. "We had a nice attendance from all the United States. I normally cap attendance at 200. It just becomes too many after that."

The NWSC seminar includes both classroom sessions and hands-on work. There were 49 different classes this year over the five-day seminar.

"Forty instructors taught classes," Burback said. "Our instructors are this industry's



experts who feel so strongly about safety that they volunteer their time to the seminar."

Show Folks of America, a non-profit amusement business association headquartered in Oroville, Calif., sponsored 15 students to attend the seminar again this year. The organization also made a cash donation that will be used for specialty classes like fall restraint and how to use a fire extinguisher. The

latter is a hands-on class on where the students actually put out fires.

Seminar attendees are able to build a tailored course curriculum that best suits their needs and the needs of their employer. The diverse class selection can change every year depending on the needs of the industry, Burback said.

This year, as in all years past, there were great networking opportunities, Burback said.

Annually at the seminar, the NWSC seminar provides

testing and certifications in **AIMS**, **NARRSO**, Carnival Tech, CPR and first aide. The seminar for years has been aligned with **Portland Community College** for accreditation in their Continuing Education Program providing four CEU's for participation and completion of the seminar.

Burback sent out special thank-yous to all of the seminar donors.

"Without their help, this seminar would not be possible," she said.

•nwshowmensclub.com



The Northwestern Showmen's Club wrapped up its 39th consecutive safety seminar in February and organizers were very pleased with the results. There were 157 attendees during the five-day event, Feb. 17-22 at Oaks Amusement Park and Funtastic Shows campus, both in Portland, Ore. There are a variety of classes taught, both classroom and hands-on, like the welding class shown at left. Martin Vine, who is most recently associated with ICL Services, Ltd., taught a session on management (right) at this year's seminar. COURTESY NWSC

Cedar Point supports charity with Winter Chill Out event

SANDUSKY, Ohio — On February 23, **Cedar Point** didn't let the cold stop the proceedings. The aptly named Winter Chill Out was met with extremely cold temperatures. With that in mind, the fundraising event still welcomed a sold-out crowd of 1,200 attendees.

For the fifth year, what started as an off-season, behind-the-scenes look for a fan website, has now evolved into an eagerly-anticipated event that allows Cedar Point aficionados to get a brief return to the shuttered park. Wrapped up in full winterized mode, the park gives these fans a deeper appreciation for what goes on when the season ends.

"Winter Chill Out is an exclusive look at Cedar Point when we don't usually provide access to the park," said **Tony Clark**, director of communications. "You get to see things from a construction perspective, see rides as they are in the middle of winter and inspecting them in our shops, and also you can see any new attractions or initiatives we are doing in the park. All the money goes to **A Kid Again**, which is a charity here in northeast Ohio. We're very happy they are the recipients of all this."

Full-time staff involved with Winter Chill Out donate their time, and the park supplies the meal and souvenirs. \$60,000 was raised at the charitable event in 2019.

"Without the volunteers from our full-time team, all of whom created amazing experiences within their areas, Winter Chill Out wouldn't be as

special as it is," said Clark. "They put in a lot of hard work."

For the first year, Cedar Point has allowed attendees to take self-guided tours through the park to see specific locations, allowing them to tailor their time and the event to their specific interests.

"It has grown year after year with more things to show off," Clark told *Amusement Today*. "It's become such a big event. The undertaking is pretty intense when you consider you have to get all those people in at specific times and make sure they go to the right places in the park — the planning actually starts right after the season ends. We plan what all the tour stops will be, what food will be served, whether there will be a souvenir, who will present ... there is a lot that goes into it. But I think the payoff is well worth it."

The event was balanced between scheduled times both indoors and outdoors. Seeing the park at their own pace, attendees could see how certain rides were winterized and inspected. Certain stops took fans inside buildings for presentations, such as a theater, maintenance area and the sign shop.

"They had some cool things on display in the sign shop," said Clark. "They were things that never made it into the park but were still really cool to see."

Two new restaurants are under construction at the Lake Erie resort, and fans could see their progress.

"The thought of helping a great cause and



Attendees of Winter Chill Out met indoors for some sessions (top) and received souvenir hats for outdoor tours (right).
COURTESY CEDAR POINT



getting exclusive access to Cedar Point is a real takeaway for our fans," said Clark, responding to AT's inquiry on what makes it worth facing the winter elements. "Whether it is rain, snow, sunshine, dirt, mud ... whatever the conditions, this is what Cedar Point life is like in the winter. We don't often let people in during the winter, but these folks get a glimpse of all the action that happens. They can see that there is plenty of work to be done and everything that our team does to make a great summer."

—Tim Baldwin



NEWS & NOTES

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An eventful and successful 2019 AIMS Safety Seminar

There are several people who deserve appreciation for their help in making the **2019 AIMS Safety Seminar** a huge success!

Thank you to our nearly 100 volunteer instructors for sharing their knowledge, passion and experience with our students. These are the people who make the amusement industry safe for all.

The keynote speech by **Patrick Hoffman**, 2018 AIMS Safety Award recipient, included a fascinating history of amusement rides and was a perfect kickoff for the week.

The future of the industry was represented well by our 2019 AIMS Ambassadors from **Six Flags Fiesta Texas**: **Malachi Flores**, **Shakeya Bright**, **Justice De Lacruz**, and **Sarah Salinas**.

Our amazing volunteers — **Tracy Shedd**, **Randy Vakiener**, **C.W. Craven**, and **Rick Achard** — were ready and able to help in every way.

A special tip of the hat goes

out to our sponsors who recognized the importance of supporting our mission to improve industry safety through leadership in education.

Finally, AIMS is appreciative to **Joe Zdnueck** and **Dan Levo** and everyone at the **Galveston Pleasure Pier** and **Landry's** for hosting a fantastic evening at the Pier including ride time on the Iron Shark Rollercoaster, Texas Star Flyer, Revolution, and Galaxy Wheel, plus games, corn hole, music and a huge spread including an incredible shrimp boil, BBQ buffet, desserts and wine beer and other beverages.

AIMS news

The Annual AIMS membership meeting was held on January 14, 2019, in Galveston, Texas. AIMS Board President **Tim Viox** reviewed changes to the bylaws which the board had approved in September 2018. Among the changes, the second vice chair position has been

replaced by a secretary, and the AIMS Board of Directors is now composed of ten M&S members and five Operator Members. With **Mike Withers (WDI, retired)**, and **Patty Sullivan (Eli Bridge Co.)**, stepping off the board, **Tony Claassen**, AIMS secretary and chair of the nominating committee, described the nomination process and presented individuals recommended by the board to fill the three now open positions. Nominees presented for member approval were **David Bromilow**, director parks and attractions, **Mobaro**; **Monty Jasper**, corporate vice-president of maintenance and engineering, **Cedar Fair Entertainment Company**; and Dr. Kathryn Woodcock, professor at **Ryerson University** in Toronto. The vote for approval was unanimous. Welcome and congratulations to all! AIMS is fortunate to have these individuals who will bring their insight and expertise to our board.

In other business, Viox

announced that AIMS has been awarded a three-year contract with the **Commonwealth of Massachusetts** to provide instruction and certification exams to inspectors in the Office of Public Safety and Inspections (OPSI). The first session was held February 4-8, 2019, and AIMS received rave reviews for the quality of instruction and information provided in the classes.

With the AIMS fiscal year beginning April 1, 2019, **Franceen Gonzales** will take the reins as AIMS Board President, replacing Tim Viox who has served as board president for the past two years. We thank Tim for his service to AIMS and wish Franceen all the best as she guides us into the next stage of development. Stay tuned for more from Franceen in the next few months.

Save the date: the 2020 AIMS Safety Seminar will be held January 12-17, 2020 in Galveston, Texas. Early registration will open in July.

Space for this AIMS page is provided courtesy of *Amusement Today* as a corporate partner of AIMS Intl. Content is provided by AT & AIMS.



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Spring Pa. Ride Safety Seminar trains and certifies 300 inspectors

AT: B. Derek Shaw
bdshaw@amusementtoday.com

HARRISBURG, Pa. — In late February, 300 people were certified or recertified at the semi-annual Pennsylvania Ride Safety Seminar conducted by a third party for the **Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture Bureau of Ride and Measurements Standards, Amusement Ride Safety Division**. This training is for class 1 and class 2 ride inspectors and general qualified inspectors, specialized inspectors and those needing recertification. The training is for personnel in amusement venues, waterparks, FEC's, haunted houses, zip lines, inflatables and other related areas.

Seminar participants choose the specialty courses that are the most beneficial for their career path, job description, abilities, and employer benefit. This spring, there were a total of 176 different course options, with a few new topics added. The 86 instructors for the three day training are all volunteers with a wide spectrum of specialties that impact the amusement industry. These trainers, from all around the country, possess a high quality of knowledge and professionalism allowing for meaningful participant interaction.

There are at least seven, one-hour class periods each day with up to 12 different classes being taught concurrently. Many courses are broad-based while some classes target very specific subjects. The idea is for attendees to leave with a good fundamental understanding of their specific opera-



Above (l to r) Phil Slaggert, Pennsylvania Ride Safety Seminar coordinator; Joe Filoramo, supervisor, Amusement Ride Safety Division, Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture; John Jardine, quality assurance inspector; John Humberger, quality assurance inspector and Randall Arndt, quality assurance inspector all with the Amusement Ride Safety Division, Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture. At right, Dan Dudley, one of the early ride safety consultants in the amusement industry is with Joe Filoramo, Supervisor, Amusement Ride Safety Division, Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture. AT/B. DEREK SHAW

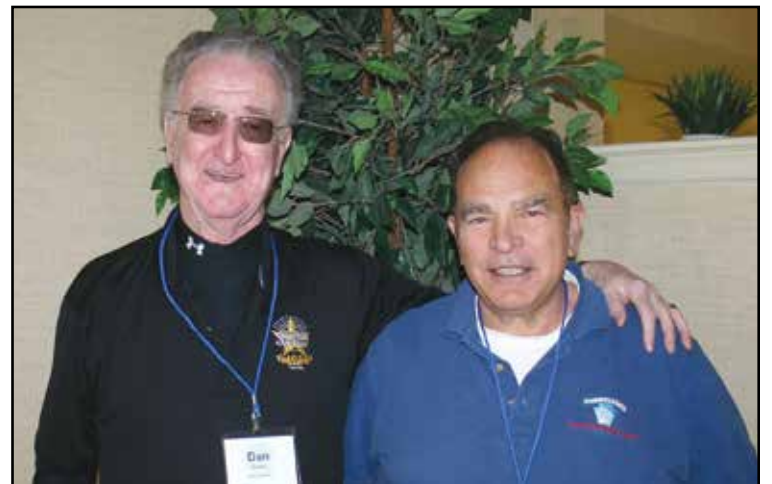
tions. This all contributes to learning and improving as an industry. On Wednesday afternoon those attendees taking maintenance courses spent the afternoon at Hersheypark with a behind-the-scenes class.

The lack of trained ride operators of late is a concern to **Joe Filoramo**, supervisor, Amusement Ride Safety Division, Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture. Filoramo stated, "This shortage of help has turned into a crisis because it is starting to relate into increases in accidents. Not enough trained [ride] operators or experienced operators, closing down equipment because there is no operator; all those things have turned into a crisis at this point for this business. We need to be sure that

we have properly trained and enough operators on site where we are operating especially in the case of patron-directed attractions, where there needs to be enforcement of the rules."

The spring seminar is typically larger than the fall offering in terms of attendance, amount of class choices and specialty areas. This includes classes on water attractions, go karts and bumper boats. Attention these days is also being paid to patron-directed equipment that is on the increase. "We're concentrating on more proactive training as dictated by our statistics and new ride/attraction types," said Filoramo.

The Pennsylvania certification is recognized in many states across the country including New Jersey. Those



inspectors are training for that states' Recognized Certified Maintenance Technician, (RCMT). There are many inspectors who don't work in Pennsylvania; however they register in Pennsylvania to have the certification on their ride from inspectors trained in the Keystone State.

Some of the numerous organizations that took part in the training included **Arnold's Family Fun Center, Autobahn Indoor Speedway, Camelback Mountain Resort, Columbia & Reading Railroad, Conneaut Lake Park, Crayola Experience, Deshler Amusements, Inc., Family Funscape Inc., Fly World Trampoline Park;**

Giggleberry Fair; Great Wolf Lodge; Kalahari Resorts; Lakemont Park; Legoland Discovery Center; Nemacolin Woodlands Resort; Palace Entertainment; Philadelphia Mobile Zipline Company; Philadelphia Zoo; Scene75 Entertainment Centers; Split Rock Resort; Strasburg Rail Road; The Oasis Family Fun Center and six YMCA's in Pennsylvania.

Upon conclusion of the spring seminar, Filoramo shared attendees's overall assessment: "I'm getting comments that they enjoyed the seminar, no one regretted coming and that we were even better organized than we were in the past."

The Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture has inspected and registered amusement rides under the Amusement Ride Safety Act since 1984 and regularly participates in education and outreach seminars that include classes and hands-on demonstrations. The fall Pennsylvania Ride Safety Seminar is scheduled for November 5 – 7 at the **Red Lion Hotel and Conference Center**, Harrisburg, just off I-283 on Lindle Road. The next spring training is set for February 25 – 27, 2020

•paridesafety.com



At left, some of the 300 attendees checked out upon completion of their three-day instruction. A.J. Slaggert, one of the instructors, presented a class on "Planning for the Unexpected" (right). Slaggert taught a total of nine classes during the three-day training. There were a total of 176 different course options for attendees to select from. AT/B. DEREK SHAW

Carvin DiGiovanni to receive 2019 Paragon Award

ALEXANDRIA, Va. — The Association of Pool & Spa Professionals is pleased to announce that its Vice President of Technical and Standards, **Carvin DiGiovanni**, will receive the 2019 Paragon Award in the category of Recreational Swimming from the **International Swimming Hall of Fame** this May.

Now in its 24th year, this award is presented annually to individuals or organizations for outstanding contributions to aquatics in the following categories: competitive swimming, water polo, competitive diving, synchronized swimming, aquatic safety and recreational swimming.

DiGiovanni was recognized for his outstanding contributions towards advancing the aquatic discipline of Recreational Swimming.

Since November 2018, DiGiovanni has been recognized by several top industry organizations for his commitment for industry excellence. He was the 2018 recipient of the Al Turner Commitment to Excellence Award and received recognition from the International Code Council PMG.

"I am truly honored to receive this award and to be recognized alongside such a remarkable group of passionate industry leaders, said DiGiovanni." "Through hard work and collaboration, it's amazing what can be achieved. As we approach the industry's next chapter, it's most gratifying to know its' future is advancing on a solid foundation."

Honorees will be recognized during the International Swimming Hall of Fame's Honoree Induction weekend in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., on May 17.

"The Paragon Award has grown each year in prestige and stature," said International Swimming Hall of Fame Honoree and Olympian Liaison, Meg Keller-Marvin. "We are honored to recognize such a remarkable group of talented individuals who have made contributions to the aquatics world. We could not be more proud of the outstanding group that makes up our 2019 award recipients."

• aspp.org

Quassy's Allan Herschell Little Dipper coaster gets a facelift

Quassy Amusement & Waterpark's classic Allan Herschell Little Dipper roller coaster train cars received a facelift this winter in the Middlebury, Conn., facility's maintenance shop. The ride originally debuted at Quassy in 1952. The coaster's frame, wheels and seats are being refurbished during the process. Quassy begins its 111th season on April 27.

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BREAKING NEWS

Disney sets debut dates for Star Wars lands

BURBANK, Calif.— The **Walt Disney Co.** has lit a match under *Star Wars* fans now that *Star Wars: Galaxy's Edge*, the elaborate 14-acre land long under construction at **Disneyland Resort** in Anaheim, Calif., and **Disney's Hollywood Studios** at **Walt Disney World Resort** in Orlando is scheduled to open May 31 and Aug. 29, respectively. The dual project, representing the theme parks' largest single-themed land expansions ever, places guests in their own *Star Wars* adventures in Black Spire Outpost, a village on the remote planet of Batuu filled with unique sights, sounds, smells and tastes. Guests are immersed in the scene as they sample galactic food and beverages, explore a collection of merchant shops and take the controls of the most famous ship in the galaxy on the Millennium Falcon: Smugglers Run ride.

Guest interactions in the Batuu environs will be enhanced with the Play Disney Parks mobile app. They may choose to aid a smuggler, join the Resistance or pledge their loyalty to the First Order. Guests can make plenty of other choices that will impact the experience of their adventures as they travel throughout the land using the app. *Star Wars: Galaxy's Edge* is the first land within a Disney park designed to integrate with the Play Disney Parks mobile app, which debuted last year.

Opening later this year in a second phase at the California and Florida theme park locations will be *Star Wars: Rise of the Resistance*, a ride that places guests in the middle of a climactic battle between the First Order and the Resistance. The journey takes passengers inside a full-size starship and aboard a nearby Star Destroyer.

Disney is alerting patrons up front that capacity is limited. Access to the theme parks, *Star Wars: Galaxy's Edge* and the new land's experiences may be restricted or unavailable at times, depending on guest demand and other factors.

Universal Orlando to roll new Potter coaster

ORLANDO — A new family roller coaster is coming to **Islands of Adventure** at **Universal Orlando Resort**. Called Hagrid's Magical Creatures Motorbike Adventure, the Intamin-manufactured ride has a lengthy track traveling through both indoor and outdoor environments at a top speed of 50 mph. Concept art for the attraction, which opens June 13 in the Wizarding World of Harry Potter — Hogsmeade, shows motorbike-shaped cars on trains zipping through a thickly forested landscape that includes a river. The park reportedly has planted 1,200 trees to help create the exterior atmosphere for the ride.

In an official promotional video released by the resort, **Alan Gilmore**, art director for the *Harry Potter* feature films, noted: "First, you'll join Hagrid's Care of Magical Creatures Class, where you'll board an enchanted motorbike just like Hagrid's. This is unlike any other ride vehicle you've ever been on before, [and] your experience will be different depending on if you are on the motorbike or in the [attached] sidecar."

"Hagrid is a huge fan favorite, so we knew we had to make it unlike any other experience in the whole world... [with] the highest level of storytelling, and the best use of technology throughout. And of course, as often is the case with Hagrid, things don't go as planned!"

Character-wise, the ride will feature Cornish pixies, centaurs and Fluffy, the three-headed dog, plus a creature not seen on film.



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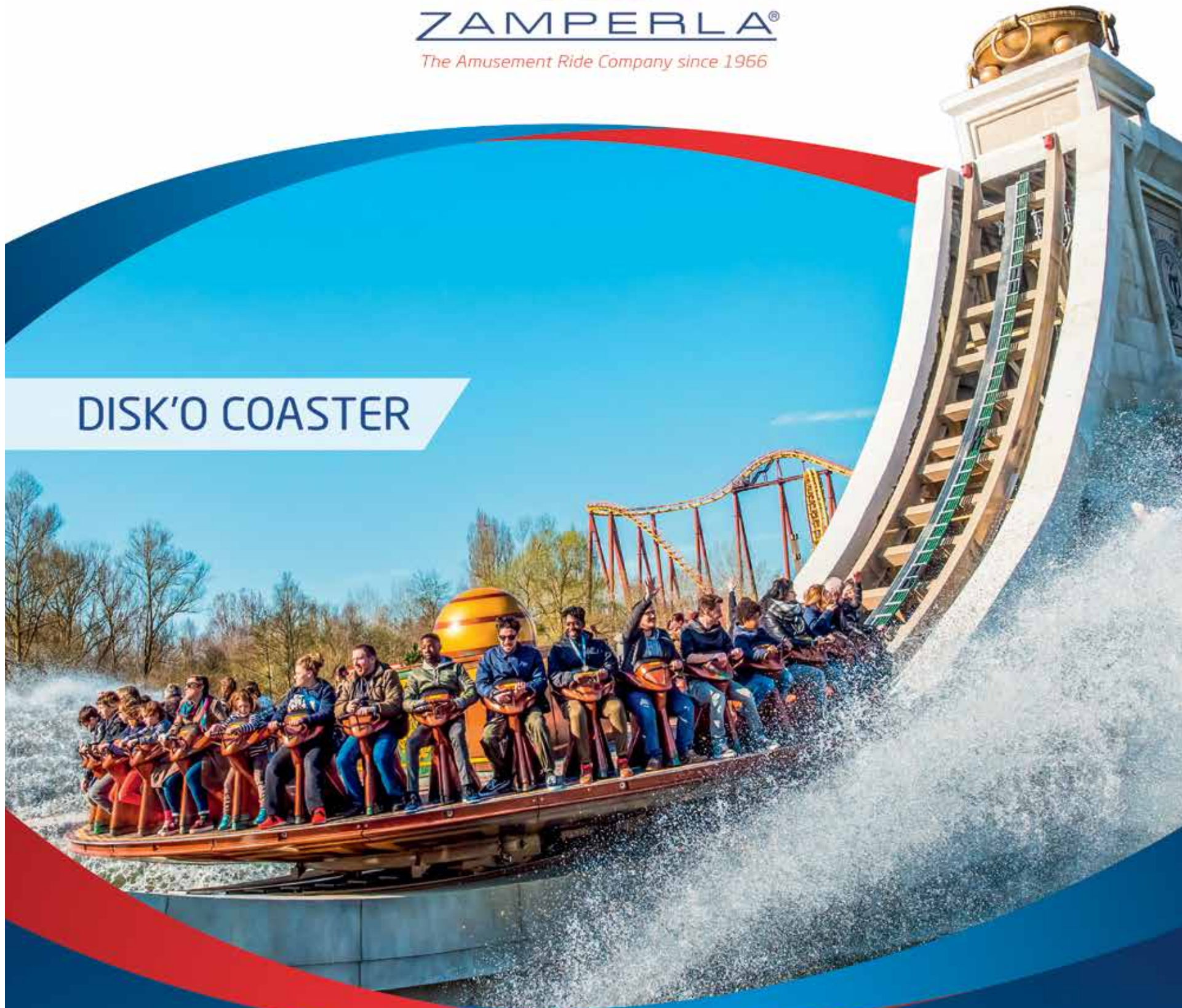
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